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H. DE BALZAC

COMÉDIE HUMAINE

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H. DE BALZAC

A BACHELOR'S ESTABLISHMENT

(*Un Ménage de garçon*)

Translated by

CLARA BELL

with a Preface by

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LIST OF ETCHINGS

SHE FOUND CHAUDET IN HIS BLUE OVERALL, MODELLING HIS LATEST STATUE . . . . *Frontispiece*

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'WHERE DO YOU COME FROM, LITTLE ONE? I NEVER SAW YOU BEFORE' 141

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Drawn and Etched by D. Murray-Smith.

PREFACE

THE second volume—the third part—of *Les Célibataires* takes very high rank among its companions. As in most of his best books, Balzac has set at work divers favourite springs of action, and has introduced personages of whom he has elsewhere given, not exactly replicas—he never did that—but companion portraits. And he has once more justified the proceeding amply. Whether he has not also justified the reproach, such as it is, of those who say that to see the most congenial expression of his fullest genius, you must go to his bad characters and not to his good, readers shall determine for themselves after reading the book.

It was the product of the year 1842, when the author was at the ripest of his powers, and after which, with the exception of *Les Parents Pauvres*, he produced not much of his very best save in continuations and rehandlings of earlier efforts. He changed his title a good deal, and in that MS. correction of a copy of the *Comédie* which has been taken, perhaps without absolutely decisive authority, as the basis of the *Édition Définitive*, he adopted *La Rabouilleuse* as his latest favourite. This, besides its quaintness, has undoubted merit as fixing the attention on one at least of the chief figures of the book, while *Un*

Ménage de garçon only obliquely indicates the real purport of the novel. Jean-Jacques Rouget is a most unfortunate creature, who anticipates Baron Hulot as an example of absolute dependence on things of the flesh, *plus* a kind of cretinism, which Hulot, to do him justice, does not exhibit even in his worst degradation. But his 'bachelor establishment,' though undoubtedly useful for the purposes of the story, might have been changed for something else, and his personality have been considerably altered, without very much affecting the general drift of the fiction.

Flore Brazier, on the other hand, the *Rabouilleuse* herself, is essential, and with Maxence Gilet and Philippe Bridau forms the centre of the action and the passion of the book. She ranks, indeed, with those few feminine types, Valérie Marneffe, La Cousine Bette, Eugénie Grandet, Béatrix, Madame de Maufrigneuse, and perhaps Esther Gobseck, whom Balzac has tried to draw at full length. It is to be observed that though quite without morals of any kind, she is not *ab initio* or intrinsically a she-fiend like Valérie or Lisbeth. She does not do harm for harm's sake, nor even directly to gratify spite, greed, or other purely unsocial and detestable passions. She is a type of feminine sensuality of the less ambitious and restless sort. Given a decent education, a fair fortune, a good-looking and vigorous husband to whom she had taken a fancy, and no special temptation, and she might have been a blameless, merry, 'sonsy' *commère*, and have died in an odour of very reasonable sanctity. Poverty, ignorance, the Rougets (father and son), Maxence Gilet, and Philippe Bridau came in her way, and she lived and died as Balzac has shown her. He has done nothing

more 'inevitable'; few things more complete and satisfactory.

Maxence Gilet is a not much less remarkable sketch, though it is not easy to say that he is on the same level. Gilet is the man of distinct gifts, of some virtues, or caricatures of virtues, who goes to the devil through idleness, fulness of bread, and lack of any worthy occupation. He is extraordinarily unconventional for a French figure in fiction, even for a figure drawn by such a French genius as Balzac. But he is also hardly to be called a great type, and I do not quite see why he should have succumbed before Philippe as he did.

Philippe himself is more complicated, and, perhaps, more questionable. He is certainly one of Balzac's *fleurs du mal*; he is studied and personally conducted from beginning to end with an extraordinary and loving care; but is he quite 'of a piece'? That he should have succeeded in defeating the combination against which his virtuous mother and brother failed is not an undue instance of the irony of life. The defeat of such adversaries as Flore and Max has, of course, the merit of poetical justice and the interest of 'diamond cut diamond.' But is not the terrible Philippe Bridau, the 'Mephistopheles *à cheval*' of the latter part of the book, rather inconsistent with the commonplace ne'er-do-weel of the earlier? Not only does it require no unusual genius to waste money, when you have it, in the channels of the drinking-shop, the gaming-table, and elsewhere, to spunge for more on your mother and brother, to embezzle when they are squeezed dry, and to take to downright robbery when nothing else is left; but a person who, in the various circumstances and opportunities of

Bridau, finds nothing better to do than these ordinary things, can hardly be a person of exceptional intellectual resource. There is here surely that sudden and unaccounted-for change of character which the second-rate novelist and dramatist may permit himself, but from which the first-rate should abstain.

This, however, may be an academic objection, and certainly the book is of first-class interest. The minor characters, the mother and brother, the luckless aunt with her combination at last turning up when the rascal Philippe has stolen her stake-money, the satellites and abettors of Max in the club of 'La Désœuvrance,' the slightly theatrical Spaniard, and all the rest of them, are excellent. The book is an eminently characteristic one —more so, indeed, than more than one of those in which people are often invited to make acquaintance with Balzac.

The third story of *Les Célibataires* has a rather more varied bibliographical history than the others. The first part, that dealing with the early misconduct of Philippe Bridau, was published separately, as *Les Deux Frères*, in the *Presse* during the spring of 1841, and a year or so later in volumes. It had nine chapters with headings. The volume form also included under the same title the second part, which, as *Un Ménage de garçon en Province*, had been published in the same newspaper in the autumn of 1842. This had sixteen chapters in both issues, and in the volumes two part-headings—one identical with the newspaper title, and the other 'A qui la Succession?' The whole book then took rank in the *Comédie* under the second title, *Un Ménage de garçon*, and retained this during Balzac's life and long afterwards. In the *Édition*

Définitive, as observed above, he had marked it as *La Rabouilleuse*, after having also thought of *Le Bonhomme Rouget*. For English use, the better known, though not last or best title, is clearly preferable, as it can be translated, while *La Rabouilleuse* cannot.

G. S.

A BACHELOR'S ESTABLISHMENT

To Monsieur Charles Nodier,
Member of the French Academy,
Chief Librarian at the Arsenal.

Here, my dear Nodier, you have a book full of those incidents which escape the action of the law under the shelter of domestic privacy; but in which the finger of God, so often called Chance, takes the place of human justice, while the moral is not the less striking and instructive for being uttered by a satirist. The outcome, to my mind, is a great lesson for the Family, and for Motherhood. We shall perhaps discover too late the effects of diminished paternal power. That authority, which formerly ceased only on the father's death, constituted the one human tribunal at which domestic crimes could be tried, and on great occasions the Sovereign would ratify and carry out its decisions. However tender and kind the mother may be, she can no more supply that patriarchal rule than a woman can fill a man's place on the throne; when the exception occurs, the creature is a monster.

I have never, perhaps, drawn a picture which shows more clearly than this how indispensable the stability of marriage is to European Society, what the sorrows are of woman's weakness, what dangers are involved in unbridled self-interest.

It is to be hoped that a society based solely on the power of money may tremble when it sees the impotence of Justice over the complications of a system which deifies success and condones every means to achieve it: That it may have prompt recourse to the Catholic Church for purification of the masses by religious feeling, and by some education other than that of a lay University! Enough fine characters, enough instances of great and noble devotion will have been seen in my Scenes of Military Life; *so I may be allowed here to show what depravity results from the exigencies of war in certain minds which dare to act in private life as they would on the field of battle.*

You have studied our times with a sagacious eye, and your philosophy betrays itself by more than one bitter reflection in the course of your elegant pages; you, better than any one, have appreciated the mischief done to the spirit of our nation by four different political systems.

I could not, therefore, place this narrative under the protection of a more competent authority. Your name, perhaps, may defend this work against the outcry it is sure to raise. Where is there a sufferer who keeps silence when the surgeon uncovers his most burning wounds? The pleasure of dedicating this drama to you is enhanced by my pride in betraying your goodwill for him who here signs himself one of your sincere admirers,

De Balzac.

In 1792 the citizens of Issoudun rejoiced in a doctor named Rouget, who was regarded as a very deep fox. Some bold folks asserted that he made his wife very unhappy, though she was the handsomest woman in the town. Perhaps this wife was rather a simpleton. In spite of the inquisitiveness of friends, the gossip of out-

siders, and the evil-speaking of the envious, the circumstances of the household were little known. Doctor Rouget was one of the men of whom it is commonly said that 'they are not easy to get on with.' And so, as long as he lived, little was said about him, and he was treated civilly.

His wife, a Demoiselle Descoings, somewhat sickly as a girl—one reason, it was said, why the doctor married her—had first a son, and then a daughter, born as it happened ten years after her brother, and not expected by the doctor, it was always reported, though he was a medical man. This late-born daughter was named Agathe.

These facts are so simple and commonplace that the historian hardly seems justified in placing them in the forefront of his narrative; but if they remained unknown, a man of Doctor Rouget's temper would be condemned as a monster, as an unnatural father, whereas he simply obeyed certain evil promptings which many persons defend under the terrible axiom: A man must know his own mind. This masculine motto has wrought misery for many wives. The Descoings, the doctor's father and mother-in-law, wool-brokers, undertook alike the sale for landowners, or the purchase for wool-merchants of the golden fleeces of le Berry, and took commission from both parties. They grew rich over this business, and then avaricious—the moral of many lives.

Their son, Descoings *junior*, a younger brother of Madame Rouget's, did not like Issoudun. He went to seek his fortune in Paris, and set up as a grocer in the Rue Saint-Honoré. This was his ruin. But what is to be said? A grocer is attracted to his business by a magnetic force as great as the repulsion which renders it odious to artists. The social forces which make for this or that vocation have been insufficiently studied. It would be curious to know what leads a man to become a stationer rather than a baker, when he is no longer compelled, as among the Egyptians, to succeed to his

father's craft. Love had helped to form Descoings' vocation. He had said to himself, 'And I, too, will be a grocer!' when he had also said something else on seeing his master's wife, a beautiful creature, with whom he fell over head and ears in love. With no auxiliary but patience and a little money sent him by his father and mother, he married the widow of the worthy Master Bixiou, his predecessor. In 1792 Descoings was regarded as a prosperous man.

At that time the parents Descoings were still living. They had retired from wool, and invested their wealth in buying government stock—another Golden Fleece! Their son-in-law, almost sure ere long to be in mourning for his wife, sent his daughter to his brother-in-law's house in Paris, partly that she might see the capital, but also with a crafty purpose. Descoings had no children. Madame Descoings, twelve years older than her husband, was in excellent health, but she was as fat as a thrush after the vintage; and the wily Rouget had enough medical skill to foresee that Monsieur and Madame Descoings, in contradiction to the philosophy of fairy-tales, would live happy and have no children. The couple might become devoted to Agathe. Now Doctor Rouget wanted to disinherit his daughter, and flattered himself it might be done if he transplanted her from home.

This young person, at that time the handsomest girl in Issoudun, was not in the least like either her father or her mother. Her birth had been the occasion of a mortal feud between Doctor Rouget and his intimate friend, Monsieur Lousteau, formerly a sub-delegate, who had just left Issoudun. When a family migrates, the natives of a place so delightful as Issoudun have a right to inquire into the reasons of so unheard-of a step. To believe some sharp tongues, Monsieur Rouget, a vindictive man, had sworn that Lousteau should die by his hand alone. From a doctor the speech seemed as deadly as a cannon-ball. When the National Assembly abol-

ished delegates, Lousteau left, and never returned to Issoudun. After the removal of this family, Madame Rouget spent all her days with Madame Hochon, the ex-sub-delegate's sister, her daughter's godmother, and the only person to whom she confided her woes. And what little the citizens of Issoudun ever knew about the beautiful Madame Rouget was told by this good soul, and not till after the doctor's death.

The first thing Madame Rouget said when her husband spoke of sending Agathe to Paris was, 'I shall never see my child again!'—'And she was sadly right,' worthy Madame Hochon would add.

The poor mother then became as yellow as a quince, and her condition by no means gave the lie to those who declared that Rouget was killing her by inches. The ways of her gawky ninny of a son must have contributed to the griefs of the unjustly accused mother. Never checked, or perhaps egged on by his father, the lad, who was altogether stupid, showed his mother none of the attention nor the respect due from a son. Jean-Jacques Rouget was like his father, but even worse; and the doctor was not very admirable, either morally or physically.

The advent of charming Agathe Rouget brought no good to her uncle Descoings. In the course of the week—or rather of the decade, for the Republic had been proclaimed—he was imprisoned on a hint from Robespierre to Fouquier-Tinville. Descoings, being rash enough to opine that the famine was unreal, was fool enough to communicate his opinion—he imagined that thought was free—to several of his customers, male and female, as he served them over the counter. Citoyenne Duplay, the wife of the carpenter with whom Robespierre lodged, and herself the *Grand Citoyen's* housekeeper, unhappily for Descoings, honoured his shop with her custom. This *citoyenne*, considered the

grocer's views as an insult to Maximilian the First. Ill pleased as she was by the manners of the Descoings couple, this illustrious *tricoteuse* of the Jacobin Club regarded Citoyenne Descoings' beauty as a kind of aristocracy. She added venom to their language while repeating it to her benevolent and kind-hearted master. The grocer was arrested on the usual charge of 'monopolising.'

Descoings in prison, his wife made a stir to obtain his release; but her efforts were so ill judged that any observer hearing her appeal to the arbiters of his fate might have supposed that all she asked was a decent way of getting rid of him. Madame Descoings knew Bridau, one of the secretaries under Roland, Minister of the Interior, and the right-hand man of all who succeeded to that office. She brought Bridau into the field to save the grocer. This really incorruptible minister, one of those virtuous dupes who are always so admirably disinterested, took good care not to tamper with the men on whom Descoings' fate depended; he tried to explain! Now, to explain to the men of that time had about as much effect as though they had been asked to restore the Bourbons. The Girondin Minister, at that time combating Robespierre, said to Bridau, 'What business is it of yours?' And each man to whom the worthy secretary applied made the same ruthless reply, 'What business is it of yours?'

Bridau very prudently advised Madame Descoings to keep quiet; but she, instead of conciliating Robespierre's housekeeper, spouted fire and flame against the informer; she went to see a member of the Convention, who was in fear for himself, and who said, 'I will speak of it to Robespierre.'

On this promise the grocer's wife rested, and her protector naturally did not speak. A few sugar-loaves, a few bottles of good liqueur offered to Citoyenne Duplay would have saved Descoings.

This little accident shows that in a revolution it is as dangerous to trust for safety to an honest man as to a scoundrel; one can rely only on one's self.

Though Descoings died, he had the honour, at any rate, of going to the scaffold with André de Chénier. There, no doubt, grocery and poetry embraced for the first time in the flesh; for they have always had, and will always have, their private relations. Descoings' execution made a far greater sensation than André de Chénier's. Thirty years elapsed before it was recognised that France had lost more by Chénier's death than by that of Descoings.

Robespierre's sentence had this good result—until 1830 grocers were still afraid of meddling in politics.

Descoings' shop was not more than a hundred yards from Robespierre's lodgings. The grocer's successor failed in business; César Birotteau, the famous perfumer, established himself in the house. But, as if the scaffold had infected the place with disaster, the inventor of the *Compound Sultana Paste* and *Eau Carminative* was also ruined. The solution of this problem is a matter for occult science.

In the course of the few visits paid by the head-clerk to the luckless Descoings' wife, he was struck by the calm, cold, artless beauty of Agathe Rouget. When he called to console the widow, who was so far inconsolable as to retire from the business after her second bereavement, he ended by marrying the lovely girl in the course of a 'decade,' as soon as her father could arrive, and he did not keep them waiting. The doctor, delighted at seeing things turn out even better than he had hoped, since his wife was the sole heiress of the Descoings, flew to Paris, not so much to be present at Agathe's marriage as to see that the settlements were drawn to his mind. Citizen Bridau, quite disinterested, and desperately in love, left this matter entirely to the perfidious doctor, who took full advantage of his son-in-law's infatuation, as will be seen in the course of this history.

Madame Rouget, or, more accurately, the doctor, inherited all the estate, real and personal, of old Monsieur and Madame Descoings, who died within two years of each other. Finally, Rouget got the better of his wife, for she died early in 1799. And he had vineyards, and he bought farmland, and he acquired iron-works, and he sold wool!—His beloved son could never do anything; he intended that the boy should be a landed proprietor, and allowed him to grow up in wealth and folly, confident that he would know as much as the most learned of them all in so far as that he would live and die like other folks.

From the year 1799, the calculating heads of Issoudun said that old Rouget had thirty thousand francs a year. After his wife's death the doctor still led a dissolute life, but with more method, so to speak, and in the privacy of home-life.

The doctor, a man of strong will, died in 1805. God knows what the good people of Issoudun had then to tell of the man's doings, and what stories were current of his horrible private life. Jean-Jacques Rouget, whom his father had of late kept tightly in hand, having discerned him to be a fool, remained unmarried for sufficient reasons, of which the explanation will form an important part of this story. His celibacy was in part the doctor's fault, as will be seen later.

It is now necessary to consider the results of the vengeance visited by the father on the daughter, whom he did not recognise as his, though you may take it for certain that she was his legitimate offspring. Nobody at Issoudun had observed one of those singular coincidences which make heredity a sort of maze in which science loses herself. Agathe was very like Doctor Rouget's mother. Just as gout is commonly observed to skip a generation, and to be transmitted from grandfather to grandson, so, not unfrequently, a likeness does the same as the gout.

Thus Agathe's eldest child, who was like his mother, in character resembled his grandfather, Doctor Rouget. We will leave the solution of this problem also to the twentieth century, with that of the nomenclature of microscopic organisms, and our grandchildren will perhaps write as much more nonsense as our learned Societies have already produced on this obscure question.

Agathe Rouget was universally admired for one of those faces which, like that of Mary, the mother of the Lord, are for ever virginal, even after marriage. Her portrait, still hanging in Bridau's studio, shows a perfectly oval face, spotlessly fair, without even a freckle, notwithstanding her golden hair. More than one artist, seeing the pure brow, the delicate nose, the shapely ear, the long lashes to eyes of the deepest blue, and infinitely mild—a face, in short, that is the embodiment of placidity—asks the great painter to this day, 'Is that copied from one of Raphael's heads?'

No man ever made a better choice than did the Republican official when he married this girl. Agathe was the ideal housewife, trained by a country life, and never parted from her mother. She was pious without bigotry, and had no learning but such as the Church allows to women. And she was a perfect wife in the vulgar sense of the word; indeed, her ignorance of life involved her in more than one misfortune. The epitaph on the Roman matron, 'She wrought needlework, and kept the house,' is an excellent account of her pure, simple, and quiet life.

At the time of the Consulate, Bridau attached himself fanatically to Napoleon, who made him head of a department of state in 1804, a year before Rouget's death. Rich with a salary of twelve thousand francs and very handsome presents, Bridau cared not at all for the disgraceful proceedings by which the estate was wound up at Issoudun, and Agathe got nothing. Six months before his death old Rouget had sold part of his estate to

his son, to whom he secured the remainder, in part by deed of gift, and in part as his direct heir. An advance on her prospective inheritance of a hundred thousand francs secured under her marriage settlement represented Agathe's share of her father's and mother's fortune.

Bridau idolised the Emperor. He devoted himself with the zeal of a fanatic to carrying out the vast conceptions of this modern demi-god, who, finding everything in France in ruins, set to work to reconstruct everything. His subordinate never said, 'Stay, enough.' Schemes, drafts, reports, précis, he undertook the heaviest burdens, so happy was he to assist the Emperor. He loved him as a man, he adored him as a sovereign, and would never endure the slightest criticism of his deeds or his schemes.

From 1804 to 1808 the official resided in a large and handsome apartment on the Quai Voltaire, close to his office and the Tuileries. A cook and a man-servant composed the establishment in the days of Madame Bridau's splendour. Agathe, always up the first, went to market, followed by her cook; while the man did the rooms she superintended the breakfast. Bridau never went to the office before eleven o'clock. As long as they both lived his wife found every day the same pleasure in preparing for him a perfect breakfast, the only meal he ate with enjoyment. All the year round, whatever the weather might be, Agathe watched her husband from the window on his way to the office, and never drew her head in till he disappeared round the corner of the Rue du Bac. She cleared the table herself, and looked round the rooms; then she dressed and played with the children, or took them for a walk, or received visitors till her husband returned. When the head-clerk brought home pressing work she would sit by his table in his study, as mute as a statue, and knitting as she watched him at work, sitting up as long as he did, and going to bed a few minutes before he went.

Sometimes they went to the play, sitting in the official box. On such occasions the pair dined at a restaurant; and the scene it presented always afforded Madame Bridau the keen delight it gives to persons unfamiliar with Paris. Compelled, not unfrequently, to accept invitations to the huge formal dinners given to her husband as head of a department, and chief clerk of a section of the Ministry of the Interior—dinners which Bridau duly returned—Agathe then followed the expensive fashions of the day; but on coming in she gladly shed this ceremonial splendour, and relapsed at home into provincial simplicity. Once a week, on Thursdays, Bridau entertained his friends, and on Shrove-Tuesday he always gave a grand ball.

This brief record is the whole history of a married life which saw but three events—the birth of two children, one three years younger than the other, and Bridau's death, which took place in 1808; he was simply killed by night-work, just as the Emperor was about to promote him in his office, and to make him a Count and Privy Councillor. At this time Napoleon was devoting his attention to home administration; he overloaded Bridau with work, and finally undermined this valiant official's health. Napoleon, of whom Bridau had never asked the least thing, had inquired into his style of living and his fortune. On hearing that this devoted servant had nothing but his salary, he understood that here was one of those incorruptible creatures who gave dignity and moral tone to his rule, and he intended to surprise Bridau by some magnificent recompense. It was his anxiety to finish an immense piece of work before Napoleon should start for Spain that killed this worthy man, by bringing on an attack of acute fever.

On the Emperor's return, while in Paris for a few days preparing for the campaign of 1809, on hearing of Bridau's death, he exclaimed, 'There are some men who can never be replaced!' Struck by a devotion that could

never have expected such dazzling rewards as he reserved for his soldiers, Napoleon determined to create an Order, with handsome pensions attached, for his Civil servants, as he had founded that of the Legion of Honour for the Military. The impression made on him by Bridau's death suggested the formation of the Order of the *Réunion*; but he never had time to complete the organisation of this aristocratic class, which is now so utterly forgotten that, on meeting with the name of this ephemeral Order, most readers will wonder what was its badge: it was worn with a blue riband. The Emperor styled it the Order of the *Réunion*, with the intention of combining the Order of the Golden Fleece of Spain with that of the Golden Fleece of Austria. But Providence, as a Prussian diplomate said, was able to hinder such profanation.

The Emperor inquired into Madame Bridau's circumstances. The two boys had each a full scholarship at the Lycée Impérial, and the Emperor charged all the cost of their education to his privy purse. He then entered Madame Bridau's name on the Pension List for four thousand francs a year, intending, no doubt, to provide ultimately for her two sons.

After her marriage till her husband's death Madame Bridau had no correspondence whatever with Issoudun. Immediately before the birth of her second boy she heard of her mother's death. When her father died—she knew he had loved her but little—the Emperor's coronation was imminent, and the ceremony gave her husband so much to do that she would not leave him. Jean-Jacques Rouget, her brother, had never written her a word since she had quitted Issoudun. Though grieved by this tacit repudiation by her family, Agathe at last thought but seldom of those who never thought of her at all. She received a letter once a year from her godmother, Madame Hochon, and answered it in commonplace phrases, never heeding the warnings which the worthy and pious woman gave her in veiled hints.

Some time before Doctor Rouget's death, Madame Hochon had written to her god-daughter that she would get nothing from her father, unless she armed Monsieur Hochon with a power of attorney. Agathe hated the idea of worrying her brother. Whether Bridau supposed that this appropriation was in conformity with the common law of the province of Berry, or whether the clean-handed and upright husband shared his wife's magnanimity and indifference to pecuniary interests, he would not listen to Roguin, his attorney, who advised him to take advantage of his high position to dispute the will by which the father had succeeded in robbing his daughter of her legal share. Husband and wife thus sanctioned what was done at Issoudun. However, Roguin had led the official to reflect on the damage to his wife's fortune. The worthy man perceived that in the event of his death Agathe would have nothing to depend on. He then looked into his affairs, and found that between 1793 and 1805 he and his wife had been obliged to draw out about thirty thousand francs of the fifty thousand which old Rouget had given to his daughter. He now invested the remaining twenty thousand in the funds, which then stood at forty, so Agathe had about two thousand francs a year in State securities. Thus, as a widow, Madame Bridau could live very decently on six thousand francs a year. Still very provincial, she was about to dismiss the man-servant, keep only the cook, and move to another set of rooms; but Madame Descoings, her intimate friend, who persisted in calling herself her aunt, gave up her apartment and came to live with Agathe, taking the departed Bridau's study for her bedroom. The two widows joined their incomes, and found themselves possessed of twelve thousand francs a year.

Such an arrangement seemed simple and natural. But nothing in life demands greater circumspection than arrangements which seem natural; we are always on our guard against what appears extraordinary; and so

we see that men of great experience, lawyers, judges, physicians, and priests attach immense importance to such simple matters; and they are thought captious. The serpent under flowers is one of the finest emblems bequeathed to us by the ancients as a warning for our conduct. How often does a simpleton exclaim, as an excuse in his own eyes and those of others, 'It was such a simple matter, that any one would have been caught'!

In 1809 Madame Descoings, who never told her age, was sixty-five years old. Spoken of in her day as *La Belle Épicière*, she was one of those rare women whom time spares, and owed to an excellent constitution the privilege of preserving her beauty, though, of course, it could no longer bear serious examination. Of middle height, plump and fresh-coloured, she had fine shoulders, and a warmly fair skin. Her light hair, tending to chestnut, showed no change of hue in spite of Descoings' disastrous end. She was extremely dainty, and liked cooking rich little dishes for her own eating; but though she seemed devoted to the kitchen, she was also very fond of the theatre, and, moreover, she indulged a vice which she wrapped in the deepest mystery—she put into the lottery. Is not the lottery, perhaps, the gulf which mythology has figured under the bottomless vat of the Danaids?

This woman—we may speak so of one who gambles in the lottery—spent rather too much in dress, no doubt, like all women who are so lucky as to remain youthful in advancing years; but with the exception of these little failings, she was the easiest creature to live with. Ready to agree with everybody, never contradictory, she was attractive by her gentle and contagious cheerfulness. She had especially one Parisian characteristic which bewitches retired clerks and traders—she understood a joke. If she did not marry a third husband, that, no doubt, was the fault of the times. During the

wars of the Empire, marrying men found handsome and wealthy girls too readily to trouble their heads about a woman of sixty.

Madame Descoings tried to cheer Madame Bridau; she made her go often to the play, or out driving; she provided her with capital little dinners; she even tried to marry her to her son Bixiou. Alas! she was forced to confess to her the terrible secret that had been so jealously kept, by herself, by the departed Descoings, and by her lawyer. The youthful, dressy Madame Descoings, who owned to no more than thirty-six, had a son of thirty-five named Bixiou, a widower, and Major of the 21st foot, who was afterwards killed at Dresden, as a colonel, leaving an only child, a boy. His mother, who never saw her grandson but in secret, spoke of the colonel as a son of her husband's by his first wife. Her confession was an act of expediency; the colonel's boy, who was at school at the Lycée Impérial with the two Bridaus, held a half-scholarship. This youth, very sharp and knowing even in his school-days, made a great reputation later as an artist and a wit.

Agathe cared for nothing on earth but her children, and would live only for them; she refused to marry again, alike from good sense and from faithful attachment. But a woman finds it easier to be a good wife than to be a good mother. A widow has two duties of a contradictory nature—she is a mother, and she ought to exert a father's power. Few women are strong enough to understand and play this double part. And so poor Agathe, with all her virtues, was the innocent cause of many misfortunes. As a result of her lack of insight, and the trustfulness habitual to lofty natures, Agathe was the victim of Madame Descoings, who dragged her into overwhelming disaster. This woman had a fancy for sets of three numbers, and the lottery grants no credit to ticket-holders. As housekeeper, she could spend the money allotted to the marketing in such ventures, and gradually

increased the debt in the hope of enriching her grandson, her dear Agathe, and the young Bridaus. When it amounted to ten thousand francs she staked higher sums, always hoping that the favourite combination, which had not yet come out in ten years, would cover the loss. Then the debt swelled rapidly. It reached the sum of twenty thousand francs; Madame Descoings lost her head, and her numbers did not come out.

Then she wished to pledge her fortune in order to repay her niece, but her lawyer Roguin showed her that this honest scheme was impossible. The elder Rouget, at the death of his brother-in-law Descoings, had taken over his liabilities and assets, indemnifying the widow by a life-annuity, charged on Jean-Jacques Rouget's estate. No usurer would consent to lend twenty thousand francs to a woman of sixty-five on a life interest worth about four thousand, at a time when ten per cent. could be got anywhere. One morning Madame Descoings threw herself at her niece's feet, and with many sobs confessed the state of affairs; Madame Bridau did not reproach her. She sent away the man-servant and the cook; sold all but the most indispensable furniture; sold out three-quarters of her State securities, paid everything, and gave up her apartment.

One of the most hideous corners of Paris is, beyond doubt, the Rue Mazarine, between the crossing of the Rue Guénégaud, to where it opens into the Rue de la Seine behind the Palais de l'Institut. The tall, grey walls of the College and Library presented to the city of Paris by Cardinal Mazarin cast chill shadows over this strip of street; the sun rarely shines on it, the northerly blast sweeps through it. The poor ruined widow went to lodge on the third floor of a house in this damp, dark, cold spot.

Facing the house were the buildings of the Institute, where, at that time, were the dens of the wild beasts

known to the townsfolk as artists, and to artists as *rapins*—daubers, art students. A man might go in a *rapin*, and might come out with the prize scholarship at Rome. This transformation was not effected without much amazing uproar at the time of year when the competitors were shut up in these cages. To take the prize, the aspiring sculptor had to execute, within a given time, a clay model of a statue; the painter, one of the pictures you may behold at the École des Beaux-arts; the musician had to compose a cantata; the architect, a design for a public building. At the time when these lines are penned, the menagerie has been transferred from those cold and gloomy buildings to the elegant Palace of the Fine Arts, a few yards from thence.

Madame Bridau's windows commanded a view of these barred cells, a singularly dreary look-out. To the north the dome of the Institute closes in the prospect; looking up the street, the only delectation for the eye is the line of hackney cabs on the stand at the top of the Rue Mazarine. Indeed, the widow at last placed three boxes of earth outside her windows, in which she cultivated one of those aerial gardens, so obnoxious to the regulations of the police, which somewhat purify the light and air.

The house, backing against one in the Rue de Seine, is necessarily shallow; the staircase turns in a spiral. The third floor is the top: three windows and three rooms—a dining-room, a little sitting-room, and a bedroom; at the back, on the other side of the landing, a small kitchen; under the roof two boys' rooms, and a vast unused garret. Madame Bridau chose this apartment for three reasons: the low rent, only four hundred francs, so she agreed for a nine years' lease; the nearness of her boys' school, for it was not far from the Lycée Impérial; and finally, it was in the quarter where she was accustomed to live. The interior of the rooms was in harmony with the building. The dining-room, hung with cheap flowered paper in yellow and green, with an

unpolished tiled floor, had the barest necessary furniture —a table, two little sideboards, and six chairs brought from her old home. The drawing-room was graced by an Aubusson carpet, given to Bridau when his office was last refurnished. The widow placed in it that common mahogany furniture, finished with Egyptian heads, manufactured by the gross in 1806 by Jacob Desmalter, and covered with silk damask with white conventional roses.

Above the sofa, a portrait of Bridau in pastel, the work of a friend, attracted the eye at once. Though the art was not above criticism, the brow plainly showed the firmness of the unknown great citizen. The calm look of his eyes, at once proud and mild, was happily rendered; the sagacity to which the prudent lips bore witness, and the honest smile, the whole tone of the man of whom the Emperor spoke as *Justum et tenacem*, had been caught, if not with talent, at any rate with truth. As you looked at this portrait, you could see that this man had always done his duty. His countenance expressed the incorruptibility which must be granted to many of the men employed during the Republic.

Opposite, over a card-table, was the brilliantly-coloured picture of the Emperor by Vernet, in which Napoleon is seen riding past swiftly, and followed by his escort. Agathe allowed herself the luxury of two large bird-cages—one full of canaries, and one of exotic birds; she had taken up this childlike fancy since her loss—irreparable to her, and to many others.

As to Agathe's bedroom, by the end of three months it had become, what it remained till the luckless day when she was obliged to leave it—a chaos which no description could reduce to order. Cats were at home in the armchairs; the birds, sometimes set at liberty, left their traces on all the furniture. The poor, kind soul strewed millet and groundsel for them in all parts of the room; the cats found titbits in broken saucers. Clothes

lay about. It was an atmosphere of provincialism and fidelity. Everything that had belonged to Bridau was carefully treasured there; his writing apparatus was kept with the care which the widow of a knight would have devoted to his armour. This woman's touching worship may be understood from a single fact—she had wrapped a pen in a sealed packet and written on it, 'The last pen used by my dear husband.' The cup from which he had drunk for the last time was under glass on the chimney-shelf. At a later date caps and 'fronts' crowned the glass shades that covered these treasured relics.

After Bridau's death, his young widow of five-and-thirty never betrayed a trace of vanity or womanly pride. Parted from the only man she had really known, esteemed, and loved, who had never caused her the smallest pang, she no longer felt herself a woman; she cared for nothing; she ceased to dress. Nothing could be more unaffected or more complete than this surrender of married happiness and personal care. Some souls are endowed by love with the power of merging their individuality in another; and when that other is gone, life is no longer possible. Agathe, who could henceforth live only for her children, felt the deepest grief at seeing how many privations they must suffer in consequence of her ruin. From the day when she moved to the Rue Mazarine there was a tinge of melancholy in her expression that was very touching. She did indeed count a little on the Emperor, but he could do no more than he was already doing; he allowed each boy, besides his scholarship, six hundred francs a year out of his privy purse.

As to the dashing Madame Descoings, she had an apartment similar to her niece's on the second floor. She had assigned to Madame Bridau a sum of a thousand crowns, to be taken as a first charge on her annuity; Roguin had taken care of this for Madame Bridau, but it would be seven years before this slow repayment could undo the mischief. Roguin, instructed to replace the

fifteen hundred francs in dividends, banked the sums he retained on this account. Madame Descoings, reduced to twelve hundred francs a year, lived poorly enough with her niece. The two honest, helpless creatures had a woman in for the morning's work only. The aunt, who liked cooking, managed the dinner. In the evening, a few friends, clerks in the office for whom Bridau had found places, would come to play a game with the two widows.

Madame Descoings still clung to her three numbers, which obstinately refused, as she said, ever to come out. She still hoped, by one turn of luck, to repay all she had surreptitiously borrowed from her niece. She loved the two little Bridaus better than her grandson Bixiou, so strongly did she feel that she had wronged them, and so greatly did she admire the sweetness of her niece, who, at the very worst, never spoke the lightest word of blame. And so it may be supposed that she spoiled Joseph and Philippe. Like all persons who have a vice to be forgiven, this old gambler in the Imperial lottery would treat them to little dinners, cramming them with dainties. A little later Joseph and Philippe could, with the greatest ease, extract from her little gifts of money; the younger to buy stumps, chalk, paper, and prints; the elder for apple-puffs, marbles, balls of string, and knives. Her passion had brought her down to being content with fifty francs a month for all expenses, that she might gamble with the remainder.

Madame Bridau on her part, out of motherly affection, did not allow her expenses to exceed that sum. To punish herself for her foolish confidence, she now heroically cut off all her little enjoyments. It often happens to a timid soul and narrow intellect that a single experience of crushed feelings and aroused suspicions leads to such an extreme development of a failing that it acquires the consistency of a virtue. The Emperor might forget, she told herself; he might be killed in battle—her pension would die with him. She shuddered as she saw such

probabilities of her children being left absolutely penniless. Incompetent as she was to understand Roguin's calculations, when he tried to prove to her that in seven years a charge of three thousand francs a year on Madame Descoings' annuity would replace the securities she had sold, she put no trust in the lawyer, or her aunt, or the State; she relied only on herself and her own thrift. By saving a thousand crowns a year out of her pension, in ten years she would have thirty thousand francs, which would at any rate secure her children fifteen hundred francs a year. At six-and-thirty she had a right to hope that she might live twenty years, and by carrying out this system she might leave each of them enough for the bare necessities of life.

Thus the two widows had sunk from unreal opulence to voluntary penury—one under the influence of a vice, the other under the promptings of the purest virtue. None of all these trivial things are foreign to the deep lesson to be derived from this story, founded on the sordid interests of common life, but with a scope all the wider perhaps in consequence.

The view over the schools, the scampering art students in the street, the need for looking at the sky, if only to turn from the hideous outlook on every side of that mouldy street; the countenance of the portrait, full of soul and dignity in spite of the amateurish handling; the association of the rich colouring, harmonised by age, of this quiet and peaceful home, the greenery of its hanging gardens, the poverty of the household, the mother's preference for her elder son, and her dislike to the younger boy's taste,—in short, the sum-total of the incidents and circumstances which form the prologue to the story, constituted perhaps the active causes to which we owe Joseph Bridau, one of the great painters of the modern French school.

Philippe, the elder of Bridau's two children, was

strikingly like his mother. Though fair-haired and blue-eyed, he had a daring look which was often mistaken for high spirit and courage. Old Claparon, who had entered the office at the same time with Bridau, and was one of the faithful friends who came in the evening to play a game with the two widows, would say of Philippe two or three times in a month, as he patted his cheek, 'Here is a brave little man, who can always say bo to a goose!' The child, thus encouraged, assumed a sort of pluck out of bravado. His temper having taken this bent, he became skilled in all physical exercises. By dint of fighting at school, he acquired the hardihood and scorn of pain which give rise to military courage, but, of course, he also acquired the greatest aversion for study; for a public school can never solve the difficult problem of developing equally and simultaneously the powers of the body and of the mind. Agathe inferred from his purely superficial resemblance to her that they must agree in mind, and firmly believed that she should some day find in him her own refined feeling, ennobled by a man's force of nature.

At the time when Madame Bridau moved to the gloomy apartment in the Rue Mazarine, Philippe was fifteen, and the engaging ways of a youth at that age confirmed his mother's belief. Joseph, who was three years younger, was an ugly likeness of his father. In the first place, his bushy black hair was always ill-kempt whatever was done to it; while his brother, though he was never quiet, was always trim; then, by some inscrutable fatality—but a too persistent fatality grows into a habit—Joseph could never keep his clothes clean; dressed in a new suit, he made old clothes of them at once. The elder, out of personal vanity, took care of his things. Unconsciously, the mother accustomed herself to scold Joseph and hold up the example of his brother. So Agathe did not always show the same face to her two boys; and when she went to fetch them from

school, she would say of Joseph, 'I wonder what state his things will be in!' All these trifles drove her heart into the gulf of favouritism.

No one of all the very commonplace people who formed the two widows' visiting circle—neither old des Bruel, nor old Claparon, nor Desroches *senior*, nor even the Abbé Loraux, Agathe's director, ever noticed Joseph's powers of observation. Possessed by this taste, the future colourist paid no heed to anything that concerned him; and so long as he was a child, this instinct looked so like stupidity that his father had been somewhat uneasy about him. The extraordinary size of his skull, and the breadth of his forehead, had at first led them to fear that the child had water on the brain. His face, still so rugged, and odd enough to be thought ugly by those who cannot see the intellectual purpose of a countenance, was, during his boyhood, rather pinched. The features, which developed later, seemed crushed together, and the intensity with which the child studied everything puckered them still more. Thus Philippe soothed all his mother's vanities, while Joseph never won her a compliment. While Joseph was silent and dreamy, Philippe could bring out those clever speeches and repartees which tempt parents to believe that their children will be remarkable men. The mother looked for wonders from Philippe, she founded no hopes on Joseph.

Joseph's predisposition to art was brought to light by a most commonplace incident. In 1812, during the Easter holidays, as he was returning from a walk in the Tuileries Gardens with his brother and Madame Descoings, he saw a student scrawl a caricature of some professor on a wall, and admiration of this chalk sketch, full of sparkling fun, riveted him to the spot. On the following day the boy placed himself at a window to watch the students going in by the door in the Rue Mazarine; he stole downstairs, and slipped into the long courtyard of the Institute, where he saw a number of

statues and busts, marble rough-hewn, terra-cotta figures, studies in plaster; he gazed at them in a fever of excitement, for his instinct was roused, his vocation seethed within him. He went into a large low room, the door standing open, and there saw a dozen or so of lads drawing a statue; he was at once the butt of their tricks.

'Pretty Dick! pretty Dick!' said the first to spy him, flinging some bread crumbs at him.

'Whose brat is that?'

'Heavens, how ugly he is!'

In short, for a quarter of an hour Joseph stood the horse-play of the studio—that of the great sculptor Chaudet; but after making game of him, the pupils were struck by his tenacity and his expression, and asked him what he wanted. Joseph replied that he very much wished to learn to draw; and thereupon everybody was by way of encouraging him. The boy, taken in by this friendly tone, explained that he was Madame Bridau's son.

'Oh! then, indeed! If you are Madame Bridau's son,' they sang out from every corner of the studio, 'you may become a great man. Hurrah for Madame Bridau's son. Is your mother pretty? To judge from your pumpkin head as a specimen, she ought to be a sweet one to look at.'

'So you want to be an artist,' said the eldest student, leaving his place, and coming to Joseph to play him some trick. 'But you must be plucky, you know, and put up with dreadful things. Yes, there are trials, tests that are enough to break your legs and arms. All these fellows that you see—well, every one of them has passed the tests. Now, that one, for instance, he went for seven days and nights without food. Come, let's see if you are fit to become an artist?'

He took one of the boy's arms and placed it straight up in the air, then he set the other at an angle as if about to strike out.

'We call that the ordeal of the telegraph,' said he. 'If you stand like that without letting your arms sink, or changing your attitude for a quarter of an hour,—well, you will have shown that you have good pluck!'

'Now, little chap, show your mettle,' said the others. 'By Jove, you must go through something to become an artist.'

Joseph, in all the good faith of a boy of thirteen, remained motionless for about five minutes, and all the pupils looked at him very gravely.

'Oh! your arm is sinking,' said one.

'Come, steady!' said another.

'By Jove, the Emperor Napoleon stood for at least a month, just as you see him there,' added a third, pointing to Chaudet's fine statue.

The Emperor was standing holding the Imperial sceptre; and this work was thrown down in 1814 from the column it finished so nobly.

In about ten minutes the perspiration was standing on Joseph's brow. At this moment a little man came in, bald, pale, and fragile; respectful silence reigned in the studio.

'Now then, you scamps, what are you about?' he asked, looking at the studio victim.

'The little chap is sitting to us,' said the tall student who had placed Joseph in position.

'Are not you ashamed of torturing a poor child so?' said Chaudet, putting down Joseph's arms. 'How long have you been standing there?' he asked, with a friendly pat on the boy's cheek.

'About a quarter of an hour.'

'And what brings you here?'

'I want to be an artist.'

'And where have you come from; whom do you belong to?'

'From mamma's.'

'Oh, ho! from mamma's!' cried the pupils.

'Silence among the easels!' cried Chaudet. 'What is your mother?'

'She is Madame Bridau. My papa, who is dead, was a friend of the Emperor's. And if you will only teach me to draw, the Emperor will pay whatever you ask.'

'His father was head of a department in the Ministry of the Interior,' cried Chaudet, struck by a reminiscence. 'And you want already to be an artist?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Come here as often as you like; you may play here. Give him an easel, paper, and chalk, and leave him to himself. Remember, you pickles, that his father did me a service,' said the sculptor. 'Here, you, Well-rope, go and buy something nice—some cakes and sugar-plums,' he added, giving some silver to the lad who had bullied Joseph. 'We shall soon see if you are an artist by the way you munch cabbage,' he went on, stroking Joseph's chin.

Then he went the round of his pupils, Joseph following him, listening and trying to understand. The treat was brought; all the lads, the sculptor himself, and the child had their share. Then Joseph was made much of, as he had before been made game of. This scene, in which the rough fun and good heart of the artist tribe were revealed to him, as he understood by instinct, made a prodigious impression on the boy. This glimpse of Chaudet the sculptor, snatched away by a too early death while the Emperor's patronage promised him glory, was like a vision to Joseph.

The child said nothing to his mother of this escapade, but every Sunday and Thursday he spent three hours in Chaudet's studio. Madame Descoings, always ready to humour the cherubs' fancies, henceforth gave Joseph charcoal, red chalk, lithographs, and drawing-paper. At the Lycée Impérial the budding artist sketched the masters, took portraits of his school-fellows, scrawled on the dormitory walls, and was astonishingly diligent

in the drawing-class. Lemire, his master there, astounded not merely by his talent, but by the progress he made, came to speak to Madame Bridau of her son's evident vocation. Agathe, a true provincial, and as ignorant of art as she was accomplished in housekeeping, was filled with alarms. When Lemire was gone, she burst into tears.

'Oh!' she cried, as Madame Descoings came in, 'I am undone! Joseph, whom I meant to make a clerk, who has his way ready made for him in the Ministry of the Interior, and guarded by the shade of his father, would have been at the head of an office by the time he was five-and-twenty.—Well, he is bent on being a painter—a beggar's trade. I always knew that boy would bring me nothing but trouble!'

Madame Descoings had to confess that for some months past she had been encouraging Joseph in his passion and screening his stolen Sunday and Thursday visits to the School of Art. At the Salon, whither she had taken him, the little fellow's interest in the pictures was something miraculous.

'And if he understands painting at the age of thirteen, my dear, your Joseph will be a man of genius.'

'I daresay; and see what genius brought his father to! To die, worked to death, at forty.'

Late in the autumn, just as Joseph was reaching the age of fourteen, Agathe, in spite of Madame Descoings' entreaties, went across to see Chaudet, and insist that her son should not be led into mischief. She found Chaudet in his blue overall, modelling his latest statue. He was barely civil in his reception of the widow of the man who had once done him a service in very critical circumstances, but his health was already undermined; he was working with the fevered energy which enables a man to do in a few moments things which it is difficult to achieve in as many months; he had just hit on a thing he had long been striving for, and handled his clay and

modelling tool with hasty jerks which, to Agathe, in her ignorance, seemed to be those of a maniac. In any other frame of mind Chaudet would have laughed outright; but as he heard this mother blaspheming Art, bewailing the fate forced upon her son, and requesting that he might never more be admitted to the studio, he broke out in sacred fury.

'I am under obligations to your lamented husband; I hoped to make him some return by helping your son, by watching over your little Joseph's first step in the noblest of all careers!' he exclaimed. 'Yes, Madame, I may tell you, if you do not know it, that a great artist is a king, more than a king; for, in the first place, he is happier, and he is independent; he lives as he pleases; and besides, he rules over the world of imagination. Your son has a splendid future before him! Such talents as his are rare; they are not revealed so young in any artists but a Giotto, a Raphael, a Titian, a Rubens, a Murillo—for he will be a painter, I think, rather than a sculptor. Light of Heaven! If I had such a boy, I should be as happy as the Emperor is in being the father of the King of Rome!—Well, Madame, you are mistress of your child's fate. Go, make an idiot of him, a man who will only put one leg before the other, a wretched scrivener; you will be committing murder! I only hope that, in spite of all your efforts, he will always remain an artist! A vocation is stronger than all the obstacles opposed to its working. A vocation!—the word means a call—Ah! it is election by God!

'But you will make your child miserable!'

He violently flung the handful of clay he had ceased to need into a tub, and said to his model, 'That will do for to-day.'

Agathe looked up, and saw a naked woman sitting on a stool, in a corner of the studio which had not yet come under her eye. At the sight she fled in horror.

'You are not to let little Bridau come here any more,'

said Chaudet to his pupils. 'Madame his mother does not approve.'

'Hoo-oo!' shouted the lads as Agathe closed the door.

'And Joseph has been going to that place!' said the poor woman, in consternation at what she had seen and heard.

As soon as the students of painting and sculpture heard that Madame Bridau would not allow her son to become an artist, all their delight was to get Joseph to their own rooms. In spite of the promise extracted from him by his mother not to go any more to the Institute, the boy often stole into a studio that Regnauld used there, and was encouraged to daub canvas. When the widow tried to complain, Chaudet's pupils told her that Regnauld was not Chaudet, that she had not made them the guardians of Monsieur her son, and laughed at her in a thousand ways. The rascally students composed and sang a ballad on Madame Bridau in a hundred and thirty-seven verses.

On the evening of that melancholy day, Agathe refused to play cards, and sat in her armchair, a prey to such deep melancholy, that the tears welled up to her beautiful eyes.

'What is the matter, Madame Bridau?' asked old Claparon.

'She believes that her son will have to beg his bread because he has the bump of painting,' said Madame Descoings. 'But I have not the smallest misgiving as to my stepson's boy, little Bixiou, though he too has a passion for drawing. Men are made to fight their way.'

'Madame is right,' said Desroches, a hard, dry man, who in spite of his abilities had never been able to rise in his office. 'I happily have but one son; for with my salary of eighteen hundred francs, and my wife, who makes barely twelve hundred by her licence to sell stamps, what would have become of me? I have articled my

boy to an attorney; he gets twenty-five francs a month and his breakfast, and I give him the same sum; he dines and sleeps at home. That is all he has; he must needs go on, and he will make his way. I have cut out more work for my youngster than if he were at college, and he will be an attorney some day; when I treat him to the play he is as happy as a king, he hugs me! Oh! I keep him tight! He has to account to me for all his money. You are too easy with your children. If your boy wants to try roughing it, let him alone! He will turn out all right.'

'For my part,' said du Bruel, a retired head-clerk who had just taken his pension, 'my boy is but sixteen, and his mother worships him. But I would not listen to a vocation that declared itself at such an early age. I think boys want directing.'

'You, Monsieur, are rich; you are a man, and have but one child,' said Agathe.

'On my honour,' Claparon went on, 'our children are our tyrants (*in hearts*). Mine drives me mad; he has brought me to ruin, and at last I have given him up altogether (*independence*). Well, he is all the better pleased, and so am I. The rascal was partly the death of his poor mother. He became a commercial traveller, and it was the very life for him; no sooner was he in the house than he wanted to be out of it; he never could rest, he never would learn. All I pray Heaven is that I may die without seeing him disgrace my name!—Those who have no children miss many pleasures, but they also escape many troubles.'

'Just like a father!' said Agathe, beginning to cry again.

'What I tell you, my dear Madame Bridau, is to prove to you that you must allow your boy to become a painter; otherwise you will lose your time——'

'If you were capable of keeping him in hand,' said the harsh Desroches, 'I would tell you to oppose his wishes;

but, seeing you so weak with them, I say—let him daub and scribble.'

'Lost!' said Claparon.

'What? Lost!' cried the unhappy mother.

'Oh yes, my *Independence in hearts*—that dry stick Desroches always makes me lose.'

'Be comforted, Agathe,' said Madame Descoings; 'Joseph will be a great man.'

At the end of this discussion, which was like every earthly discussion, the widow's friends united in one opinion, which by no means put an end to her perplexities. She was advised to allow Joseph to follow his bent.

'And if he is not a man of genius,' said du Bruel, who was civil to Agathe, 'you can always get him a place.'

On the landing Madame Descoings, seeing out the three old clerks, called them the 'three Sages of Greece.'

'She worries herself too much,' said du Bruel.

'She may think herself only too lucky that her boy will do anything!' said Claparon.

'If only God preserves the Emperor,' said Desroches, 'Joseph will be provided for elsewhere. So what has she to be anxious about?'

'She is afraid of everything where her children are concerned,' replied Madame Descoings.

'Well, dear little woman,' she went on, as she re-entered the room, 'you see they are all of one mind. What have you to cry for now?'

'Oh! if it were Philippe, I should have no fears. You do not know what goes on in those studios. They actually have naked women there!'

'But they have a fire, I hope,' said Madame Descoings.

A few days later news came of the disastrous rout at Moscow. Napoleon was returning to organise fresh armies and call on France for further sacrifices. Now

the poor mother was tortured by very different alarms. Philippe, who did not like college, was positively bent on serving the Emperor. A review at the Tuileries, the last Napoleon ever held, of which Philippe was a spectator, had turned his head. At that period of military display the sight of the uniforms, the authority of an epaulette, had an irresistible fascination for some young men. Philippe believed himself to have the same taste for military service that his brother had for the arts.

Unknown to his mother, he wrote to the Emperor a petition in the following words:—

'SIRE,—I am the son of your Bridau; I am eighteen years old, and measure nearly six feet; I have stout legs, a good constitution, and I wish to be one of your soldiers. I appeal to your favour to be enrolled in the army, etc.'

Within twenty-four hours the Emperor had sent Philippe to the Imperial Military School of Saint-Cyr; and six months later, in November 1813, he called him out as sub-lieutenant in a cavalry regiment. During part of the winter Philippe remained in depôt; but as soon as he had learnt to ride he set out full of ardour. In the course of the campaign in France, he gained his lieutenancy in a skirmish of the advanced guard, when his headlong valour saved his Colonel. The Emperor made him Captain after the battle of La Fère-Champenoise, and placed him on the staff. Stimulated by this promotion, at Montereau Philippe won the Cross. Then, having witnessed Napoleon's farewell at Fontainebleau, and being driven to fanaticism by the scene, Captain Philippe refused to serve under the Bourbons.

When he went home to his mother in July 1814, he found her a ruined woman. In the course of the long vacation Joseph's scholarship was cancelled; and Madame Bridau, whose pension had been paid out of the Emperor's privy purse, vainly applied for a clerkship for him in the offices of the Ministry of the Interior. Joseph, more than ever devoted to painting, was enchanted,

and only besought his mother to allow him to go to Monsieur Regnauld's studio, promising her that he would make a living. He was, he said, high enough in the second class at school, and could get on without rhetoric.

Philippe, a captain, and wearing an Order at nineteen, after serving under Napoleon on two battlefields, immensely flattered his mother's pride; so, though he was rough, noisy, and in reality devoid of all merit but the vulgar courage of a slashing swordsman, to her he was the man of genius; while Joseph, who was small, sickly, and thin, with a rugged brow, who loved peace and quiet, and dreamed of fame as an artist, was doomed, as she declared, never to give her anything but worry and anxiety. The winter of 1814-15 was a good one for Joseph, who, by the secret interest of Madame Descoings and of Bixiou, a pupil of Gros, was admitted to work in that famous studio, whence proceeded so many different types of talent, and where he formed a close intimacy with Schinner.

Then came the great 20th of March; Captain Bridau, who joined the Emperor at Lyons and escorted him back to the Tuileries, was promoted to be Major of the Dragoon Guards. After the battle of Waterloo, where he was wounded, but slightly, and won the Cross of a Commander of the Legion of Honour, he next found himself with Maréchal Davoust at Saint-Denis, and not with the army of the Loire; thus, by the interest of Maréchal Davoust, he was allowed to retain his Cross and his rank in the army, but he was put upon half-pay. Joseph, uneasy about the future, studied meanwhile with an ardour that made him ill more than once in the midst of the hurricane of public events.

'It is the smell of paint,' Agathe would say to Madame Descoings. 'He ought to give up work that is so bad for his health.'

All Agathe's anxieties were then centred in her son

the Lieutenant-Colonel. She saw him again in 1816, fallen from his pay and profits of about nine thousand francs a year as Major in the Emperor's Dragoon Guards, to half-pay amounting to three hundred francs a month; she spent her little savings in furnishing for him the attic over the kitchen.

Philippe was one of the most assiduous Bonapartists that haunted the Café Lemblin, a thorough constitutional Bœotia. There he acquired the habits, manners, and style of living of half-pay officers; nay, he outdid them, as any young man of twenty was sure to do, solemnly vowing a mortal hatred of the Bourbons; he was not to be talked over, and even refused such opportunities as were offered him of employment in the field with his full rank. In his mother's eyes Philippe was showing great strength of character.

'His father could have done no better,' said she.

Philippe could live on his half-pay. He would cost his mother nothing, while Joseph was entirely dependent on the two widows. From that moment Agathe's preference for Philippe was manifest. Hitherto it had been covert; but the persecution under which he suffered as a faithful adherent to the Emperor, the memory of the wound her darling son had received, his courage in adversity—which, voluntary as it was, seemed to her noble adversity—brought out Agathe's weakness. The words, 'He is unfortunate,' justified everything.

Joseph, whose nature overflowed with the childlike simplicity which is superabundant in the youthful artist-soul, and who had been brought up to admire his elder brother, far from resenting his mother's favouritism, vindicated it by sharing in her worship of a 'veteran' who had won Napoleon's Orders in two battles—of a man wounded at Waterloo. How could he doubt the superiority of this big brother, whom he had seen in the splendid green-and-gold uniform of the Dragoon Guards, at the head of his squadron on the Champ de Mai. And

in spite of her preference, Agathe was a good mother. She loved Joseph, but not blindly; she simply did not understand him. Joseph worshipped his mother, whereas Philippe allowed her to adore him. Still, for her the dragoon moderated his military coarseness, while he never disguised his contempt for Joseph, though expressing it not unkindly. As he looked at his brother's powerful head, too large for a body kept thin by constant work, and still, at the age of seventeen, slight and weakly, he would call him 'the brat.' His patronising ways would have been offensive but for the artist's indifference, in the belief, indeed, that a soldier always had a kind heart under his rough manners. The poor boy did not yet know that really first-rate military men are as gentle and polite as other superior persons. Genius is everywhere true to itself.

'Poor child!' Philippe would say to his mother. 'Don't tease him; let him amuse himself.' And this contempt was in his mother's eyes an evidence of brotherly affection.

'Philippe will always love and protect his brother,' she thought.

In 1816 Joseph obtained his mother's permission to convert the loft adjoining his bedroom into a painting-room, and Madame Descoings gave him a small sum to purchase such things as were indispensable to his 'business' as a painter; for in the minds of the two widows painting was but a trade. Joseph, with the energy and zeal that are part of such a vocation, arranged everything in his humble studio with his own hands. The landlord, at Madame Descoings' request, made a skylight in the roof. Thus the attic became a large room, and was painted chocolate-colour by Joseph; he hung some sketches against the walls; Agathe, not very willingly, had a small cast-iron stove fixed; and Joseph could now work at home, not, however, neglecting Gros' studio or Schinner's.

The Constitutional party, consisting largely of half-pay officers and the Bonapartists, were at that time frequently engaged in riots round the House of Representatives, in the name of the Charter, which no one would hear of, and they plotted sundry conspiracies. Philippe, who must needs get mixed up in them, was arrested, but released for lack of evidence; but the War Minister cut off his half-pay, reducing him to what might be called punishment pay. France was no longer the place for him; Philippe would end by falling into some trap laid by the Government agents. There was at that time a great talk of these *agents provocateurs*. So, while Philippe was playing billiards in cafés suspected of disaffection, losing his time, and getting into a habit of drinking various liqueurs, Agathe lived in mortal terrors for the great man of the family.

The 'three Sages of Greece' were too well used to walking the same way every evening, to mounting the stairs to the widows' rooms, and to finding the ladies always expecting them, and anxious to ask them the news of the day, ever to cease their visits; they came regularly to their game in the little green drawing-room. The Ministry of the Interior, thoroughly purged in 1816, had kept Claparon on its lists as one of the trimmers who murmur in an undertone the news from the *Moniteur*, adding, 'Do not get me into trouble!' Desroches, dismissed soon after his senior du Bruel, was still fighting for his pension. These three friends, seeing Agathe's despair, advised her to send the Colonel abroad.

'There is much talk of conspiracies, and your son, with his character, will be the victim of some such affair, for there is always some one to peach.'

'The Devil!' said du Bruel, in a low voice, and looking about him. 'He is the stuff of which his Emperor used to make his marshals, and he ought not to give up his calling. Let him serve in the East, in the Indies——'

'But his health?' objected Agathe.

'Why does not he enter an office?' said Desroches. 'So many private concerns are being started. I mean to get a place as head-clerk in an Assurance Company as soon as my pension is settled.'

'Philippe is a soldier; he only cares for fighting,' said Agathe the warlike.

'Then he should be a good boy, and apply for active service with——'

'This crew?' cried the widow. 'Oh, you will never get me to suggest it!'

'You are wrong,' replied du Bruel. 'My son has just been helped on by the Duc de Navarreins. The Bourbons are very good to all who join them honestly. Your son will be appointed as Lieutenant-Colonel to a regiment.'

'They will take none but noblemen in the cavalry, and he will never be full colonel,' cried Madame Descoings.

Agathe, in great alarm, implored Philippe to go abroad and offer his services to some foreign power. Any one of them would receive with favour an officer of the Emperor's staff.

'Serve with foreigners?' cried Philippe in horror.

Agathe embraced her son fervently, exclaiming, 'He is his father all over.'

'He is quite right,' said Joseph. 'A Frenchman is too proud of his column to lead any foreign columns. Besides, Napoleon may come back again yet.'

To please his mother, a splendid idea occurred to Philippe: He might join General Lallemand in the United States, and co-operate in founding the *Champ d'Asile*, one of the most disastrous hoaxes ever perpetrated under the name of a National Fund. Agathe paid ten thousand francs, and went with her son to le Havre to see him on board ship.

At the end of 1817, Agathe was managing to live on the six hundred francs a year left to her in Government

securities; then, by a happy inspiration, she invested at once the ten thousand francs that remained to her of her savings, and so had seven hundred francs a year more.

Joseph wished to contribute to her act of sacrifice; he went about dressed like a bum-bailiff, wearing thick shoes and blue socks; he wore no gloves; he burnt coal instead of wood; he lived on bread, milk, and cheap cheese. The poor lad never heard a word of encouragement from anybody but old Madame Descoings and from Bixiou, his school-fellow and fellow-student, who was by this time employed in drawing capital little caricatures, besides having a small place in a Government office.

'How glad I was to see the summer of 1818!' Bridau would often say when speaking of these hard times. 'The sun saved my buying fuel.'

He was already quite as good a colourist as Gros, and only went to his master for advice; he was thinking of riding a tilt at the classic school, of breaking free from Greek conventionality and the leading strings which fettered an art whose birthright is nature as it is, in the omnipotence of its creativeness and its caprice. Joseph was making ready for the struggle which, from the day when he first exhibited at the Salon, was never more to cease.

It was a terrible year for them all. Roguin, the widows' notary, disappeared, taking with him all the money kept back during the past seven years from Madame Descoings' annuity, which by this time ought to have been bringing them in two thousand francs a year. Three days after this catastrophe there came from New York a bill drawn on his mother by Colonel Philippe. The poor fellow, swindled like so many more, had lost everything in the scheme for the *Champ d'Asile*. This letter, by which Agathe, Madame Descoings, and Joseph all were melted to tears, spoke of debts incurred at New York, where his companions in misfortune had stood surety for him.

'And it was all my doing that he went!' cried the poor mother, ingenious in finding excuses for Philippe's sins.

'I advise you not to send him often on such journeys,' said old Madame Descoings to her niece.

Madame Descoings was heroic; she still paid Madame Bridau a thousand crowns; but she also still paid regularly to keep up the three numbers which had never come out since 1799. At this time she began to doubt the honesty of the management. She accused the Government authorities, believing them quite capable of suppressing the issue of the three numbers in the drawing so as to keep up the frenzied deposits of the ticket-holders.

After a brief consideration of ways and means, it seemed impossible to raise a thousand francs without selling some shares. The two women talked of pledging their plate, some of their house-linen, or even part of the furniture that they could do without. Joseph, terrified by these plans, went to call on Gérard, and explained the situation; the great painter obtained a commission for him from the Master of the Royal Household to make two copies of the portrait of Louis XVIII., at the price of five hundred francs each. Though little addicted to liberality, Gros took his pupil to a shop where Joseph got all the necessary materials. But the thousand francs were to be paid only on delivery. Joseph set to work and painted four little pictures in ten days; these he sold to the dealers, and brought his mother a thousand francs; she could meet the bill. A week later, another letter from the Colonel announced to his mother that he was sailing on board a packet, the captain having accepted his promise to pay. Philippe added that he would need at least a thousand francs more on disembarking at le Havre.

'Well,' said Joseph to his mother, 'I shall have finished the copies; you can take him the thousand francs.'

'Dear Joseph!' cried Agathe, embracing him with

tears. 'Then you really love that poor persecuted boy? He is our glory and all our hope! So young, so brave, and so unfortunate! Everything is against him; let us all three at any rate be on his side.'

'Painting is good for something after all, you see,' cried Joseph, happy at having at last won his mother's permission to become a great artist.

Madame Bridau flew to meet her beloved son, Colonel Philippe. At le Havre she walked every day to a point beyond the round tower built by Francis I., every day imagining fresh and dreadful alarms as she watched for the American packet. None but mothers know how this kind of torment revives their first motherhood. The vessel came in one fine morning in October 1819, without damage, without having met the slightest squall.

The air of his native land, and the sight of his mother, must always have some effect, even on the coarsest soul, especially after an exile full of disasters. Philippe gave way to an effusiveness of feeling which made Agathe think to herself, 'How much this one loves me!'—Alas! the young officer loved but one creature in the world, and that was Colonel Philippe. His ill-fortune in Texas, his stay in New York—a place where speculation and self-interest are carried to the highest pitch, where the coarsest selfishness becomes cynicism, where each man, living for himself alone, is compelled to tread his own path, where politeness does not exist—in short, the smallest incidents of his expedition had developed in Philippe all the bad tendencies of the disbanded trooper. He was a bully, a drinker, a smoker, assertive and rude; penury and privations had deteriorated him. Also, the Colonel considered himself persecuted; the effect of this belief on a man of low intelligence is to make him an intolerant persecutor. To Philippe the whole universe began at his head and ended at his feet; the sun shone for him alone. To crown all, his experience of New York,

interpreted by a man of action, had robbed him of every moral scruple.

With beings of his stamp there are but two modes of existence: they are believers, or they are unbelievers; they have all the virtues of an honest man, or they are carried away by every pressure of necessity; then they get into a habit of regarding their smallest interests, and every passing wish prompted by passion, as a necessity. On this plan a man may go far.

In appearance, but in appearance only, the Colonel had preserved the blunt, frank, easy-going manner of a soldier. Thus he was a very dangerous man; he seemed as guileless as a child; but having no one to think of but himself, he never did anything without carefully considering what he had best do, much as a wily prosecutor considers every twist and turn of a tricky rogue. Words cost him nothing, and he would give you as many as you chose to believe. If a man should, unluckily, be so rash as to take exception to the explanations by which he would justify the discrepancies between his conduct and his speech, the Colonel, who was a first-rate shot, who could challenge the most skilful swordsman, and who had the cool head of a man to whom life is a matter of indifference, was ready to demand satisfaction for the first sharp word. Pending that, he looked like a man so ready for blows as to make compromise impossible. His tall figure had become burly, his face was tanned during his stay in Texas, and he had caught the abrupt speech and peremptory tone of a man who means to be respected in the midst of the populace of New York.

Such as he was, plainly dressed, and his frame evidently hardened by his recent hard life, Philippe was a hero in his poor mother's eyes; but he had, in fact, become what the common people plainly describe as 'a bad lot.'

Madame Bridau, startled by her darling son's destitute condition, had a complete outfit made for him at le Havre; as she listened to the tale of his woes, she had

not the heart to check his eating, drinking, and amusing himself, as a man was bound to drink and enjoy himself on his return from the *Champ d'Asile*.

The occupation of Texas by the remnant of the Grand Army was no doubt a splendid idea; but it was the men that were found wanting rather than the conditions, since Texas is now a republican state of great promise. The experiment made under the Restoration proved emphatically that the interests of the Liberals were purely selfish, and in no sense national; aiming at power, and at nothing else. Neither the material, the place, the idea, nor the goodwill was lacking, only the money and the support of that hypocritical party; they had vast sums at their disposal, and would give nothing when the reinstatement of an Empire was at stake.

Housewives of Agathe's stamp have the good sense which enables them to see through such political frauds. The hapless mother saw the truth as she heard her son's story; for, during his absence, her interest in the exile had led her to listen to the pompous announcements of the Constitutional newspapers, and to watch the vicissitudes of the braggart subscription, which yielded scarcely a hundred and fifty thousand francs when five or six millions were needed. The leaders of the Liberal party very soon discovered that they were, in fact, doing the job for Louis XVIII. by sending away the glorious remnant of the French army, and they abandoned to their fate the most devoted and ardent enthusiasts, who were the first to go. Agathe never was able to explain to Philippe that he had been the prey of fraud rather than of persecution. In her belief in her idol she accused herself of stupidity, and lamented the disasters of the times which had fallen on Philippe.

And it was true that, until now, in all his misfortunes he had been less a sinner than a victim to his fine temper and energy, to the Emperor's overthrow, to the duplicity of the Liberals and the vindictiveness of the Bourbons

towards the Bonapartists. All through the week they spent at le Havre—a horribly expensive week—she never dared hint that he should become reconciled to the King's Government and call at the War Office; she had enough to do to get him away from le Havre, where living is very dear, and back to Paris, when she had no money left but just enough for the journey. Madame Descoings and Joseph, who met them as they alighted from the coach in the yard of the Messageries Royales, were shocked at the change in Agathe.

'Your mother has grown ten years older in two months,' said the old lady to Joseph, in the midst of the embracing, while their two trunks were taken down.

'Well, Granny Descoings, and how are you?' was Philippe's tender greeting to the grocer's widow, whom Joseph affectionately addressed as *Maman Descoings*.

'We have no money to pay for the cab,' said Agathe piteously.

'But I have,' replied the young painter. 'My brother is splendidly burnt!' he exclaimed, looking at Philippe.

'Yes, I am coloured like a pipe. But you have not altered, little man.'

Joseph, now one-and-twenty, and much appreciated by a few friends who had stood by him in evil days, felt his powers, and was conscious of his talent. In a little society of young men devoted to science, letters, politics, and philosophy, he represented painting; he was hurt by his brother's contemptuous tone, emphasised by an incivility; Philippe pulled his ear as if he were a mere child. Agathe observed the sort of chill which came over Madame Descoings and Joseph after their first affectionate warmth, but she set matters right by speaking of the privations endured by Philippe during his exile.

Madame Descoings, anxious to make a high day in honour of the return of the prodigal son, as she called him in her own mind, had prepared the best of dinners, to which she had invited old Claparon and the elder

Desroches. All the friends of the family were invited, and came in the evening. Joseph had asked Léon Giraud, d'Arthez, Michel Chrestien, Fulgence Ridal, and Bianchon, his friends of the coterie. Madame Descoings had told Bixiou—her stepson, as she called him—that the young people would play a game of écarté. The younger Desroches, sternly forced by his father to become a law-student, also joined the party. Du Bruel, Claparon, Desroches, and the Abbé Loraux stared at the traveller, frightened by his coarse face and manners, his voice husky with dram-drinking, his vulgar language and looks. While Joseph was setting out the card-tables, her most intimate friends gathered round Agathe and asked her—

'What do you intend to do with Philippe?'

'I do not know,' said she. 'But he is still determined not to serve under the Bourbons.'

'It is very difficult to find him a place in France. If he will not re-enter the army, he will not easily find a pigeon-hole ready for him in the civil service,' said old du Bruel. 'And only to listen to him is enough to prove that he will never make a fortune, like my son, by writing plays.'

Agathe's glance in reply was enough to make them all understand how anxious she was as to Philippe's prospects; and as neither of her friends had any suggestions to offer, they all kept silence. The exile, young Desroches, and Bixiou were playing écarté, a game that was then the rage.

'Maman Descoings, my brother has no money to play with,' said Joseph, in the kind and staunch old lady's ear.

The gambler in the lottery went to fetch twenty francs, and gave them to the artist, who quietly slipped them into his brother's hand.

All the guests arrived. Two tables were set for boston, and the party grew lively. Philippe proved but a sorry player. After winning a good deal at first, he

lost, till, by eleven o'clock, he owed fifty francs to young Desroches and Bixiou. The noise and disputes over the écarté more than once disturbed the peaceful boston players, and they kept covert watch over Philippe. The Colonel gave evidence of such a bad spirit that, in his last wrangle with young Desroches—who was not very good-tempered either—the elder Desroches, though his son was in the right, pronounced against him, and desired him to play no more. Madame Descoings did the same with her grandson, who had begun firing such keen witticisms that Philippe did not understand them; still, they might have led this caustic satirist into danger if by chance one of his barbed arrows had pierced the Colonel's dense intelligence.

'You must be tired,' said Agathe to Philippe. 'Come to your room.'

'Travelling forms the young!' said Bixiou, smiling, when Agathe and the Colonel were out of the room.

Joseph, who rose with the dawn and went early to rest, did not see the evening out. Next morning Agathe and her friend, as they laid breakfast in the front room, could not help thinking that evening company would cost them very dear if Philippe went on playing 'that game,' as Madame Descoings phrased it. The old woman, now seventy-six years of age, proposed to sell her furniture, to give up her rooms on the second floor to the landlord—who was most willing to have them—to take Agathe's drawing-room for her bedroom, and to use the other room as a sitting- and dining-room in one. In this way they could save seven hundred francs a year. This retrenchment would enable them to allow Philippe fifty francs a month while he was looking out for something to do. Agathe accepted the sacrifice.

When the Colonel came down, after his mother had asked him if he had been comfortable in his little room, the two widows laid the state of affairs before him. Madame Descoings and Agathe, by combining their

incomes, had five thousand three hundred francs a year, of which four thousand were Madame Descoings' annuity. The old lady allowed Bixiou six hundred francs a year—for the last six months she had owned him to be her grandson—and six hundred to Joseph; the rest, with Agathe's income, was spent in housekeeping generally. All their savings were gone.

'Be quite easy,' said the Colonel; 'I will look out for some appointment. I will cost you nothing. All I want is a crust and a crib for the present.'

Agathe kissed her son, and his old friend slipped a hundred francs into his hand to pay the gambling debt of the evening before.

Within ten days the sale of the furniture, the giving up of the rooms, and the necessary changes in Agathe's dwelling were effected with the rapidity to be seen only in Paris. During these ten days Philippe regularly made himself scarce after breakfast, came in to dinner, went out in the evening, and did not come home to bed till midnight.

This was the plan of life into which the soldier fell almost mechanically, and which became a rooted habit: he had his boots blacked on the Pont Neuf for the two sous he would otherwise have spent in crossing by the Pont des Arts to the Palais Royal, where he took two liqueur glasses of brandy while reading the papers, an occupation absorbing him till mid-day; at about noon he made his way by the Rue Vivienne to the Café Minerve, at that time the headquarters of the Liberals, and there he played billiards with some retired fellow officers. There, while he won or lost, Philippe always got through three or four more glasses of various spirits, and then smoked ten *régie* cigars as he wandered and lounged about the streets. In the evening, after smoking a few pipes at the Estaminet Hollandais, he went up to the gambling tables at about ten. The waiter handed him a card and a pin; he consulted certain experienced

players as to the state of the run on red or black, and staked ten francs at an opportune moment, never playing more than three times, whether he won or lost. When he had won, as he commonly did, he drank a tumbler of punch and made his way home to his attic; but by this time he would be talking of smashing up the *ultras* and the bodyguard, and sing on the stairs, 'Preserve the Empire from its foes.'—His poor mother, as she heard him, would say ,'Philippe is in good spirits this evening,' and she would go up to give him a kiss, never complaining of the reek of punch, spirits, and tobacco.

'You ought to be pleased with me, my dear mother,' said he one day towards the end of January. 'I am sure I lead the most regular life!'

Philippe had dined out five times with some old comrades. These soldiers had talked over the state of their affairs, and discussed the hopes they founded on the building of a submarine vessel to be employed to deliver the Emperor. Among the fellow-officers he here met again, Philippe was particularly thick with a former captain of the Dragoon Guard named Giroudeau, in whose company he had first smelt gunpowder. This officer of Dragoons was the cause of Philippe's completing what Rabelais calls the devil's outfit, and adding a fourth iniquity to his dram, his cigar, and his gambling.

One evening, at the beginning of February, Giroudeau took Philippe after dinner to the *Gaité* Theatre, to a box sent to a small theatrical paper belonging to his nephew Finot, for whom the old soldier kept the cash-box and the accounts, addressed and checked the papers. Dressed after the fashion of the Bonapartist officers of the Constitutional opposition, in loose, long coats with a square collar buttoned up to the chin, hanging to their heels, and decorated with the rosette, armed with a loaded cane hanging to the wrist by a plaited leather cord, the two troopers had treated themselves to a skin-

ful, as they expressed it, and opened their hearts to each other as they went into the box. Through the haze of a considerable number of bottles of wine and 'nips' of sundry liqueurs, Giroudeau pointed out to Philippe a plump and nimble little damsel on the stage, known as Florentine, whose favours and affections, as well as the box, were his through the all-powerful influence of the paper.

'But, dear me,' said Philippe, 'how far does she carry her favours for an old dappled-grey trooper like you?'

'Praise the Lord, I have never forgotten the old principles of our glorious uniform!' said Giroudeau. 'I never spent two farthings on a woman.'

'What next?' cried Philippe, with a finger to his left eye.

'Quite true,' said Giroudeau. 'But, between ourselves, the paper has something to do with it. To-morrow you will see, in two lines, the management will be advised to give Mademoiselle Florentine a *pas seul*.—On my word, my dear boy, I am very happy,' said Giroudeau.

'Well,' thought Philippe, 'if this venerable Giroudeau, in spite of a skull as bare as your knee, his eight-and-forty years, his corporation, his face like a wine-grower, and his nose like a potato, can be sweetheart to a dancer, I ought to be the man for the first actress in Paris.—Where are such articles to be had?' he asked Giroudeau.

'I will take you this evening to see Florentine's humble home. Though my Dulcinea gets but fifty francs a month from the theatre, thanks to a retired silk mercer named Cardot, who allows her five hundred francs a month, she is not so badly set up.'

'Why—what?' said Philippe, jealous.

'Pooh!' said Giroudeau. 'True love is blind.'

After the play Giroudeau took Philippe to see Mademoiselle Florentine, who lived in the Rue de Crussol, a stone's-throw from the theatre.

'We must behave,' said Giroudeau; 'Florentine has her mother with her. As you may suppose, I cannot afford to allow her one, and the good woman really is her mother. The woman was a doorkeeper, but she does not lack brains, and her name is Cabirolle. Call her Madame; she is particular about that.'

Florentine had at her house that evening a friend of hers, a certain Marie Godeschal, as lovely as an angel, as cold as a ballet-dancer, and a pupil of Vestris, who promised her the highest Terpsichorean distinctions. Mademoiselle Godeschal, who was anxious to come out at the *Panorama-dramatique*, under the name of Mariette, counted on the patronage of a First Groom of the Chambers, to whom Vestris had long promised to present her. Vestris, as yet still in full vigour, did not think his pupil sufficiently advanced. Marie Godeschal was ambitious, and she made her assumed name of Mariette famous; but her ambition was praiseworthy. She had a brother, a clerk in Derville the lawyer's office. Orphans and poor, but loving each other truly, the brother and sister had seen life as it is in Paris; he wished to become an attorney so as to provide for his sister; she determined in cold blood to be a dancer, and to avail herself of her beauty as well as of her nimble legs to buy a connection for her brother. Apart from their affection for each other, from their interests and their life together, everything else was to them, as to the ancient Romans and the Hebrews, barbarian, foreign, and inimical. This beautiful affection, which nothing could ever change, explained Mariette's life to those who knew her well.

The brother and sister lived at this time on the eighth floor of a house in the Vieille Rue du Temple. Mariette had begun learning at the age of ten, and had now seen sixteen summers. Alas! for lack of a little dress her dainty beauty, hidden under an Angola shawl, perched on iron pattens, dressed in cotton print, and only moderately neat, could never be suspected by any one but the

Paris lounger in pursuit of *grisettes* and on the track of beauty under a cloud.

Philippe fell in love with Mariette. What Mariette found in Philippe was an officer of the Dragoon Guards and of the Emperor's staff, a young man of seven-and-twenty, and the delight of proving herself superior to Florentine by the evident superiority of Philippe to Giroudeau. Both Florentine and Giroudeau—he to give his comrade pleasure, and she to procure a protector for her friend—urged Mariette and Philippe to a 'water-colour marriage.' The Parisian expression *à la détrempe* is equivalent to the words 'morganatic marriage' applied to kings and queens.

Philippe, as they went out, explained to Giroudeau how poor he was.

'I will mention you to my nephew Finot,' said Giroudeau. 'Look here, Philippe, this is the day of black coats and fine words; we must knock under. The inkstand is all powerful now. Ink takes the place of gunpowder, and words are used instead of shot. After all, these little vermin of editors are very ingenious, and not bad fellows. Come to see me to-morrow at the office; by that time I will have spoken two words about you to my nephew. Before long you will have something to do on some newspaper. Mariette, who will have you now because she has nothing else—make no mistake on that point—no engagement, no hope of coming out, and whom I told that, like me, you were going in for journalism—Mariette will prove that she loves you for yourself, and you will believe her! Do as I do; keep her from rising as long as you can. I was so desperately in love that as soon as Florentine wanted to dance a *pas seul*, I begged Finot to write her up; but says my nephew to me, "She is clever, is she not? Well, the day she first dances a step of her own she will show you across the doorstep." That's Finot all over. Oh, you'll find him a wide-awake chap.'

Next day, at about four o'clock, Philippe made his way to the Rue du Sentier, and up to a small room on the entresol, where he found Giroudeau shut up like a wild beast in a sort of hen-coop with a wicket; it contained a little stove, a little table, two little chairs, and some little billets for the fire. The whole apparatus was dignified by these magical words, *Office for Subscribers*, painted on the outside door in black letters, and the word *Cashier* in running hand on a board hung on the bars of the cage. Along the wall opposite the old trooper's coop was a bench, on which an old soldier was eating a snack; he had lost an arm, and Giroudeau addressed him as Coloquinte (Colocynth), by reason, no doubt, of the Egyptian hue of his face.

'Sweetly pretty!' said Philippe, looking about him. 'What business have you here—you who rode in poor Colonel Chabert's charge at Eylau? In the devil's name! In all the devils' names! A superior officer . . .'

'Why, yes! Roo-ty too-too! A superior officer signing receipts in a newspaper office,' said Giroudeau, settling his black silk skull-cap. 'And what is more, I am the responsible editor of that rhodomontade,' and he pointed to the paper.

'And I, who once went to Egypt, now go to the Stamp Office,' said the pensioner.

'Silence, Coloquinte,' said Giroudeau. 'You are in the presence of a brave man who carried the Emperor's orders at the battle of Montmirail!'

'Pre-sent arms!' cried Coloquinte. 'I lost my missing arm there.'

'Coloquinte, mind the shop; I am going upstairs to my nephew.'

The two soldiers went up to the fourth floor, to an attic at the end of a passage, and found a young man with cold, colourless eyes stretched on a shabby sofa. The civilian did not disturb himself, though he offered cigars to his uncle and his uncle's friend.

'My dear fellow,' said Giroudeau, in a meek and gentle voice, 'here is the valiant Major of whom I spoke.'

'What then?' said Finot, looking Philippe from head to foot, while the officer lost all his spirit, like Giroudeau, in the presence of the diplomate of the press.

'My dear boy,' said Giroudeau, trying to play the uncle, 'the Colonel has just come from Texas.'

'Oh! you were caught for Texas and the Champ d'Asile? You were very young, too, to turn soldier-ploughman.'

The sting of this witticism can be appreciated only by those who can remember the flood of prints, screens, clocks, bronzes, and casts to which the idea of the soldier-ploughman gave rise, as a great allegory of the fate of Napoleon and his veterans, which at last found vent in various satirical songs. The idea was worth a million at least; you may still see the soldier-ploughman on wall-papers in the depths of the provinces.

If this young man had not been Giroudeau's nephew, Philippe would have smacked his cheeks.

'Yes, I was caught for it; and I lost twelve thousand francs and my time,' replied he, trying to force a smile.

'And you still love the Emperor?'

'He is my God!' replied Philippe Bridau.

'You are a Liberal?'

'I shall always side with the Constitutional Opposition. Oh, Foy! Manuel! Laffitte! There are men for you. They will rid us of these wretches who have sneaked in at the heels of the foreigners.'

'Well, then,' said Finot coldly, 'you must take the benefit of your misfortunes, for you are a victim to the Liberals, my good fellow. Remain a Liberal if you are set on your opinions; but threaten the Liberals with divulging the madness of the Texas scheme. You never got a farthing of the national subscription, I suppose? Well, then, you are in a splendid position: ask for the accounts

of the fund. This is what will happen: A fresh newspaper is now being started by the Opposition under the auspices of the deputies of the Left; you will be made cashier with a thousand crowns a year, a place for life. You have only to find twenty thousand francs as security; get them, and in a week you will have a berth. I will advise them to silence you by making them offer you the place—but cry out, and cry loud!'

Giroudeau allowed Philippe to go down a few steps before him, pouring out thanks as he went, and said to his nephew: 'Well, you're a pretty fellow, you are! You let me hang on here with twelve hundred francs a year——'

'The paper will not live a year,' replied Finot. 'I have something better for you.'

'By Heaven!' said Philippe to Giroudeau, 'that nephew of yours is no fool. I had never thought of taking the benefit of my position, as he puts it.'

That evening, at the Café Lemblin and the Café Minerve, Colonel Philippe broke out in abuse of the Liberals who sent a man to Texas, who talked gammon about the soldier-ploughman, who left brave men to starve in misery after squeezing twenty thousand francs out of them, and driving them for two years from pillar to post.

'I mean to ask for an account of the money subscribed for the Champ d'Asile,' he said to one of the regular customers at the Café Minerve, who repeated it to the journalists of the Left.

Philippe did not go home to the Rue Mazarine; he went to tell Mariette that he was about to be employed on a paper with ten thousand subscribers, in which her Terpsichorean ambitions should be ardently supported. Agathe and Madame Descoings sat up for him in an agony of terror, for the Duc de Berry had that moment been assassinated.

The Colonel walked in next day, a few minutes after

breakfast. When his mother expressed her uneasiness at his absence, he flew into a passion, and asked if he were of age or no.

'By Heaven! I come in with good news, and you all look as solemn as hearses. The Duc de Berry is dead! Well, so much the better! There is one less of them.—I am going to be cashier in a newspaper office, with a thousand crowns a year, so you are free from all worry so far as I am concerned.'

'Is it possible?' cried Agathe.

'Yes, if you can stand surety for twenty thousand francs. You have only to deposit your securities for thirteen hundred francs a year, and you will draw your half-yearly dividends all the same.'

The two widows, who for two months past had been killing themselves with wondering what Philippe was doing, and how to find him employment, were so delighted at his prospects that they thought no more of the various difficulties of the hour. In the evening old du Bruel, Claparon, who was a dying man, and the inflexible Desroches *senior*—the three Sages of Greece—were unanimous. They advised the widow to stand surety for her son. The paper having been started, most fortunately, before the murder of the Duc de Berry, escaped the blow struck at the press by M. Decaze. The widow Bridau's State securities for thirteen hundred francs of dividends were deposited as a pledge for Philippe, and he was appointed cashier. This good son then promised to pay the widows a hundred francs a month for his board and lodging, and was regarded as the best of good boys. Those who had thought ill of him congratulated Agathe.

'We judged him wrongly,' they said.

Poor Joseph, not to be left in the lurch, tried to keep himself, and succeeded.

At the end of three months, the Colonel—who ate and drank for four, who was very particular, and, under

the pretext of his paying, led the two widows into expensive living—had not contributed a farthing. Neither his mother nor Madame Descoings would remind him of his promise, out of delicate feeling. The year went by, and not one of the crown pieces, which Leon Gozlan picturesquely calls a tiger with five claws, had passed from Philippe's pocket to the housekeeping. On this point, to be sure, the Colonel had silenced his scruples of conscience: he rarely dined at home.

'And, after all, he is happy,' said his mother. 'He is easy, he has an appointment.'

Through the influence of the theatrical articles, written by Vernon, a friend of Bixiou's, of Finot's, and Giroudeau's, Mariette came out; not indeed at the *Panorama-dramatique*, but at the Porte Saint-Martin, where she was a success even by the side of Bégrand. Among the directors of that theatre there was just then a wealthy and luxurious general, who, being in love with an actress, had become an impresario for her sake. There are always in Paris men in love with some actress, dancer, or singer, who make themselves theatrical managers for love's sake. This general knew Philippe and Giroudeau. By the help of the two newspapers, Finot's and Philippe's, Mariette's début was arranged by the three officers, with all the greater ease because, as it would seem, such passions are always reciprocally helpful in matters of folly.

Bixiou, ever mischievous, had soon told his grandmother and the pious Agathe that Philippe the cashier, the bravest of the brave, was the lover of Mariette the famous dancer at the Porte Saint-Martin. The stale news fell like a thunder-clap on the two widows. In the first place, Agathe's religious sentiments made her look on the women of the stage as brands of hell, and then they both believed that such women ate gold, drank pearls, and devoured the finest fortunes.

'Why!' said Joseph to his mother, 'do you suppose that Philippe would be such a fool as to give any money to Mariette? Such women only ruin rich men.'

'There is a talk already of securing Mariette at the Opera-house,' said Bixiou. 'But don't be alarmed, Madame Bridau; the corps diplomatique haunts the Porte Saint-Martin, and that handsome girl will soon throw over your son. They say there is an ambassador who is desperately in love with Mariette.—There is some other news. Old Claparon is dead, and is to be buried to-morrow; and his son, who is a banker, and rolling in gold and silver, has ordered a third-class funeral. The fellow has no breeding. Such a thing could not happen in China!'

Philippe, with an eye to profit, proposed to marry the dancer; but being on the eve of an engagement at the Opera, Mademoiselle Godeschal refused him, either because she guessed the Colonel's motive, or because she understood that independence was necessary to her fortunes.

Throughout the remainder of this year Philippe came to see his mother twice a month at most. Where was he? At his office, at the theatre, or with Mariette. No light was shed on his proceedings in the home in the Rue Mazarine.

Giroudeau, Finot, Bixiou, Vernon, and Lousteau saw him leading a life of pleasure. Philippe was at every party given by Tullia, one of the first singers at the Opera; by Florentine, who took Mariette's place at the Porte Saint-Martin; by Florine and Matifat, Coralie and Camusot. From four o'clock, when he left his office, he amused himself till midnight; for there was always some ploy arranged the day before, a good dinner given by somebody, an evening at cards, or a supper-party. Philippe lived in his element.

But this carnival, which lasted for eighteen months, was not devoid of cares. The fair Mariette on her début

at the Opera, in January 1821, subjugated one of the most brilliant dukes of Louis XVIII.'s court. Philippe tried to hold his own against the duke; but, notwithstanding some luck at the gaming-table, as the month of April came round his passion compelled him to borrow from the cash-box of the newspaper. In the month of May he owed eleven thousand francs. In the course of that fatal month Mariette went to London, to make what she might out of the milords, while the temporary Opera-house was being built in the Rue Le Pelletier. Philippe the ill-starred still loved Mariette in spite of her flagrant infidelities—such things happen; she, on her part, had never seen anything in him but a rough and brainless soldier, the first rung of the ladder, on which she did not mean to stay long. Also, as she had foreseen the day when Philippe would have no more money, the dancer had been clever enough to secure supporters among journalists, which made it unnecessary for her to cling to Philippe; still, she felt the gratitude peculiar to women of her stamp to the man who had been the first to level the obstacles in the dreadful career of an actress.

Philippe, thus obliged to let his terrible mistress go to London without being able to follow her, returned to his winter quarters, to use his own expression, and came home to his attic in the Rue Mazarine; there he made many gloomy reflections as he went to bed and got up again. He felt it impossible to live otherwise than as he had been living for this year past. The luxury of Mariette's life, the dinners and suppers, the evenings spent behind the scenes, the high spirits of wits and journalists, the turmoil he had lived in, and all the flattering effect on his senses and on his vanity,—this existence, which is to be found only in Paris, and which offers some new sensation every day, had become more than a habit to Philippe; it was a necessity, like tobacco and drams. Indeed, he plainly perceived that he could not live without this constant enjoyment.

The idea of suicide passed through his mind, not on account of the deficit which would be discovered in his balance, but by reason of the impossibility of being with Mariette and living in the atmosphere of pleasures in which he had wallowed for the last twelvemonth. Full of these gloomy notions, he made his appearance, for the first time, in his brother's studio, and found Joseph at work, in a blue blouse, copying a picture for a dealer.

'So that is the way pictures are made?' said Philippe as an opening.

'No,' said Joseph, 'but that is the way they are copied.'

'How much do you get for that?'

'Oh, never enough. Two hundred and fifty francs; but I study the master's method; I learn by it, I find out the secrets of the trade.—There is one of my pictures,' he went on, pointing with the handle of his brush to a sketch of which the paint was still wet.

'And how much a year do you pocket now?'

'Unfortunately, I am as yet unknown excepting to the painters. Schinner is giving me a helping hand; he is to get me some work at the château de Presles, where I am going in October to paint some arabesques and borders and ornaments for the Comte de Sérizy, who pays very well. With pot-boilers like this, dealers' orders, I may make eighteen hundred to two thousand francs before long, all clear profit. But I shall send that picture in to the next exhibition; if it is liked, I am a made man. My friends think well of it.'

'I am no judge,' said Philippe in a quiet tone, which made Joseph look up at him.

'What is the matter?' he asked, seeing his brother look pale.

'I want to know how long it would take you to paint my portrait.'

'Well, if I worked at nothing else, and the light were good, I could do it in three or four days.'

'That is too long. I can only give you a day. My poor mother is so fond of me that I should wish to leave her my likeness. But say no more about it.'

'Why, are you going away again?'

'Going, never to return,' said Philippe with affected cheerfulness.

'Come, Philippe, my dear fellow, what ails you? If it is anything serious, I am a man, and I am not a simpleton. I am preparing for a hard struggle, and if discretion is needed I can hold my tongue.'

'Can I rely upon it?'

'On my honour.'

'You will never say a word to any living being?'

'Never.'

'Well, then, I am going to blow my brains out.'

'What, are you going to fight a duel?'

'I am going to kill myself.'

'Why?'

'I have taken eleven thousand francs out of the cash-box, and I must give in my accounts to-morrow; my deposit-money will be diminished by half; my poor mother will be reduced to six hundred francs a year. That, after all, is nothing; I might be able later to give her back a fortune. But I am disgraced; I will not live disgraced.'

'You will not be disgraced if you pay; but you will lose your place; you will have nothing left but the five hundred francs pension attached to your Cross. Still, you can live on five hundred francs.'

'Good-bye,' cried Philippe, who hurried downstairs, and would not listen.

Joseph left his work, and went down to join his mother at breakfast; but Philippe's confession had spoiled his appetite. He took Madame Descoings aside, and told her the dreadful news. The old woman gave a loud

cry of dismay, dropped a pipkin full of milk that she had in her hand, and sank on to a chair. Agathe hurried in. With one exclamation and another, the fatal facts were told to the mother.

'He? To fail in honesty! Bridau's son has taken money that was intrusted to his keeping!'

The widow was trembling in every limb; her eyes seemed to grow larger in a fixed stare; she sat down, and burst into tears.

'Where is he?' she cried between her sobs. 'Perhaps he has thrown himself into the Seine!'

'You must not despair,' said Madame Descoings, 'because the poor boy has come in the way of a bad woman, and she made a fool of him. Dear me; that often happens! Until he came home Philippe had been so constantly unlucky, he had so few chances of being happy and loved, that we need not wonder at his passion for this creature. All passions lead to excess. I have something of the kind in my life for which I blame myself, and yet I think myself an honest woman. One fault does not constitute a vice! Besides, after all, only those who do nothing at all never make any mistakes.'

Agathe was so overwhelmed by despair that the old lady and Joseph were obliged to make light of Philippe's crime by telling her that such things occur in every family.

'But he is eight-and-twenty,' cried Agathe; 'he is no longer a child!' a cry of anguish betraying what the poor woman thought of her son's conduct.

'I assure you, mother, that he thinks of nothing but your grief and the wrong he has done,' said Joseph.

'Oh, great God! Bring him back. Only let him live, and I will forgive him all!' cried the poor mother, who in fancy beheld a horrible picture of Philippe dragged dead out of the river.

For some minutes awful silence reigned. The day was spent in dreadful suspense. All three flew to the

sitting-room window at the least noise, and gave themselves up to endless conjectures.

While his family were in this despair, Philippe was calmly setting everything in order in his office. He had the impudence to hand in his accounts, saying that, for fear of mischance, he had kept eleven thousand francs at his lodgings. The rascal left at four o'clock, taking five hundred francs more from the cash-box, and coolly went up to the gambling tables, where he had not been seen since his appointment, for he had at least understood that a cashier must not frequent a gambling hell. His subsequent conduct will show that he resembled his grandfather Rouget rather than his admirable father. He might perhaps have made a good general; but in private life he was one of those deep-dyed scoundrels who shelter their audacity and their evil deeds behind the screen of strict legality, and under the reticence of the family roof.

Philippe was perfectly calm during this critical venture. At first he won, and picked up as much as six thousand francs; but he let himself be dazzled by the hope of ending his anxieties at one stroke. He left the game of trente-et-quarante on hearing that at the roulette table there had been a run of sixteen on the black; he staked five thousand francs on the red, and black turned up again for the seventeenth time. The Colonel then staked his remaining thousand francs on the black, and won. Notwithstanding this astonishing intuition of the chances, his head was not clear; he felt this, and yet he would go on; but the spirit of divination which guides players, enlightening them by flashes, was already exhausted. It was now intermittent—the gamester's ruin. Intuition, like the rays of the sun, acts only in an inflexibly straight line; it can guess right only on condition of never diverting its gaze; the freaks of chance disturb it. Philippe lost everything. After so severe an ordeal the most reckless spirit or the boldest must collapse.

As he went home Philippe thought the less of his promise to kill himself, because he had never really meant it. He had forgotten his lost appointment, his impaired deposit-money, his mother, and Mariette—the cause of his ruin: he walked on mechanically. When he went in, his mother, bathed in tears, Madame Descoings, and Joseph threw their arms round his neck, hugged him, and led him with rejoicing to a seat by the fire.

'Good!' thought he; 'the announcement has had its effect.'

The wretch put on an appropriately dolorous face, with all the more ease because his evening's play had considerably upset him. On seeing her atrocious Benjamin pale and dejected, his mother knelt down by him, kissing his hands, pressing them to her heart, and looking long in his face with her eyes full of tears.

'Philippe,' she said in a choked voice, 'promise not to kill yourself; we will forget everything.'

Philippe looked at his unnerved brother, at Madame Descoings with a tear in her eye, and he said to himself, 'They are good souls!' Then he lifted up his mother, seated her on his knee, clasped her to his heart, and whispered as he kissed her, 'You have given me new life!'

Madame Descoings contrived to produce a very good dinner, adding a couple of bottles of old wine and a little West Indian liqueur, a treasure remaining from her former stock-in-trade.

'Agathe, we must let him smoke his cigars,' said she at dessert. And she handed Philippe some cigars.

The two poor souls believed that by giving this fellow every comfort he would learn to love his home and stay there, and they tried to accustom themselves to tobacco smoke, which they abominated. This immense sacrifice was not even suspected by Philippe.

Next day Agathe had aged by ten years. Her alarms

once relieved, reflection followed, and the poor woman had not closed an eye throughout that dreadful night. She was now reduced to an income of six hundred francs. Madame Descoings, like all fat women who love good eating, had an obstinate catarrh and cough, and was growing heavy; her step on the stairs sounded like a pavior's hammer, she might die at a moment's notice, and four thousand francs would perish with her. Was it not preposterous to count on that source of supply? What was to be done? What would become of her? Agathe, resolved to be a sick-nurse rather than to be a burthen on her children, was not thinking of herself. But what would Philippe do, reduced to his five hundred francs of pension attached to the Cross of the Legion of Honour?

By contributing a thousand crowns a year for the last eleven years, Madame Descoings had more than twice repaid her debt, and she was still sacrificing her grandson's interests to those of the Bridau family. Agathe, though all her strict and honest sentiments were outraged, in the midst of this dire disaster still could ask herself as she thought of her son, 'Poor boy, could he help it? He is faithful to his oath as a soldier. It is my fault for not getting him married. If I had found him a wife, he would not have formed a connection with this dancer. He has such a strong nature!' . . .

The old tradeswoman, too, had reflected during the night as to the means of saving the honour of the family. At daybreak she got out of bed, and crept to her friend's room.

'It is not your part, nor Philippe's, to manage this delicate matter,' said she. 'Though our two old friends, Claparon and du Bruel, are dead, we still have old Monsieur Desroches, who has good judgment, and I will go to him this morning. Desroches must report that Philippe has been the victim of his confidence in a friend, and that his weakness in such cases quite unfits

him for the post of cashier. What has happened once may happen again: Philippe prefers to retire, thus he will not be dismissed.'

Agathe, seeing in this official lie a cloak for Philippe's honour, at any rate in the eyes of strangers, embraced the old lady, who went out to settle the dreadful business. Philippe had slept the sleep of the just.

'She is a sharp one!' said he with a smile, when Agathe explained to her son why breakfast was late.

Old Desroches, the last friend left to these two poor women, still remembered, in spite of his hard nature, that it was Bridau who had given him his place, and he executed the delicate task proposed to him with the skill of an accomplished diplomate. He came to dine with the family, and to remind Agathe that she must go on the morrow to the Treasury in the Rue Vivienne to sign the transfer of the securities to be sold, and take out the coupons for six hundred francs, her remaining dividends. The old man did not leave this hapless household till he had obtained Philippe's signature to a petition to the Minister of War begging to be reinstated in active service. Desroches pledged his word to the two women that he would forward the petition through the departments of the War Office, and take advantage of the Duke's triumph over Philippe with the dancer to secure that great man's interest.

'Within three months he will be lieutenant-colonel in the Duc de Maufrigneuse's regiment, and you will be rid of him.'

Desroches went home loaded with blessings by the two women and Joseph.

As to the newspaper, as Finot had prophesied, two months later it had ceased to appear. Thus, to the world, Philippe's defalcation had no results. But Agathe's motherly feeling had been deeply wounded. Her belief in her son once shaken, she lived in perpetual

terrors, mitigated by satisfaction when she found that her sinister anticipations were unfounded.

When men like Philippe, gifted with personal courage, but moral cowards and sneaks, see the course of affairs around them following its usual channel after a plunge in which their moral status has almost perished, this acceptance of the situation by their family or friends is an encouragement. They are sure of impunity; their perverted mind, their gratified passions, lead them to consider how they succeeded in evading the social law, and they become atrociously clever. Thus, a fortnight after, Philippe, once more an idle man and a lounger, inevitably returned to the life of cafés, to his sittings relieved by drams, his long games of billiards with punch, his nightly visit to the gaming-tables, where he risked a small stake at a lucky moment, and pocketed such little winnings as sufficed to pay for his dissipations. He made a display of economy to deceive his mother and her friend, wore an almost filthy hat, hairless at the edges of the crown and brim, patched boots, a threadbare greatcoat, on which the red rosette scarcely showed, so darkened was it by long wear and soiled with splashes of spirits or of coffee. His greenish buckskin gloves lasted a long time, and he never cast off his satin stock till it looked like tow.

Mariette was this man's only love, and the dancer's faithlessness did much to harden his heart. Now and then, when he won more than he expected, or if he were supping with his friend Giroudeau, Philippe would court a Venus of the street, out of a sort of brutal scorn for all her sex. Still, he kept regular hours, breakfasted and dined at home, and came in every night at about one. Three months of this wretched life restored Agathe to some little confidence.

As for Joseph, who was at work on the splendid picture to which he owed his reputation, he lived in his studio. On the word of her grandson, who firmly

believed in Joseph's triumph, Madame Descoings lavished maternal care on the painter; she carried up his breakfast in the morning, ran his errands, blacked his boots. The artist never appeared till dinner-time, and gave his evenings to his friends of the Artistic Society. He also read a great deal; he was giving himself the thorough and serious education which a man gets only from himself, and which every man of talent does, in fact, give himself between the ages of twenty and thirty. Agathe, seeing so little of Joseph, and feeling no uneasiness about him, lived in Philippe only, since he alone gave her those alternations of rising fears and terrors allayed which are, to a certain extent, the very life of feeling, and as necessary to motherhood as love is.

Desroches, who came about once a week to call on the widow of his old friend and chief, could give her hopes: the Duc de Maufrigneuse had applied for Philippe to be appointed to his regiment, the War Minister had asked for a report; and as the name of Bridau was not to be found on any police-list or in any criminal trial, in the early part of the year Philippe would get his papers and orders to join. To succeed in this matter, Desroches had stirred up all his acquaintances; his inquiries at the head-office of the police led to his hearing that Philippe was to be seen every night in the gaming-houses; and he thought it wise to communicate the secret to Madame Descoings, but to her alone, begging her to keep an eye on the future lieutenant-colonel, to whom any scandal might be ruin; for the moment, the War Minister would not be likely to ask whether Philippe were a gambler. And once enrolled under the regimental flag, the officer would give up a passion that was the result of want of occupation.

Agathe, who now had no company in the evening, read her prayers by the fire; while Madame Descoings read her fortune by the cards, interpreting her dreams, and applying the rules of the *Cabala* to her stakes. The

lighthearted and obstinate old woman never missed a drawing of lottery-tickets; she still staked on the same three numbers which had never yet been drawn. This set of numbers was now nearly twenty-one years old—it would soon be of age. Its holder based high hopes on this trivial fact. One of the numbers had never come out at any drawing of either of the wheels ever since the lottery was founded, so she staked heavily on this number, and on every combination of the three figures. The bottom mattress of her bed was the hiding-place for the poor old creature's savings; she unsewed it, pushed in the gold piece she had saved on her necessities, neatly wrapped in wool, and sewed it up again. She was resolved, at the last Paris drawing, to risk all her savings on the combinations of her cherished three numbers.

This passion, universally condemned, has never been duly studied. No one has understood this opium to poverty. Did not the lottery, the most puissant fairy in the world, give rise to magical hopes? The turn at roulette, which gives the player a vision of limitless gold and enjoyments, only lasted as long as a lightning flash; while the lottery gave five days of life to that glorious gleam. What social power can, in these days, make you happy for five days, and bestow on you in fancy all the delights of civilised life—for forty sous? Tobacco, a mania a thousand times more mischievous than gambling, destroys the body, undermines the intellect, stupefies the nation; the lottery caused no misfortunes of that kind. The passion was compelled to moderation by the interval between the drawings, and by the particular wheel the ticket-holder might affect. Madame Descoings never staked on any but the Paris wheel. In the hope of seeing the three numbers drawn which she had kept in hand for twenty years, she had subjected herself to the greatest privations to enable her to stake freely on the last drawing of the year.

When she had cabalistic dreams—for all her dreams

did not bear on the numbers of the lottery—she would go and tell them to Joseph; he was the only being who would listen to her, not merely without scolding her, but saying the kindly words by which artists can soothe a monomania. All really great minds respect and sympathise with genuine passions; they understand them, finding their root in the heart or the brain. As Joseph saw things, his brother loved tobacco and spirits, his old Maman Descoings loved lottery-tickets, his mother loved God, young Desroches loved lawsuits, old Desroches loved fly-fishing; every one, said he, loves something. What he loved was ideal beauty in all things; he loved Byron's poetry, Géricault's painting, Rossini's music, Walter Scott's romances.

'Every man to his taste, Maman,' he would say, 'but your three-pounder hangs fire.'

'It will not miss. You shall be a rich man, and my little Bixiou as well!'

'Give it all to your grandson,' cried Joseph. 'After all, do you as you please.'

'Oh, if it comes out, I shall have enough for everybody. To begin with, you shall have a fine studio; you shall not have to give up going to the Opera in order to pay your models and colourman.—Do you know, child,' she went on, 'that you have not given me a very creditable part in that picture of yours?'

Joseph, from motives of economy, had used Madame Descoings as the model for a head in his splendid painting of a young courtesan introduced by an old woman to a Venetian senator. This work, a masterpiece of modern art, mistaken for a Titian by Gros himself, prepared the younger painters to recognise and proclaim Joseph's superiority in the Salon of 1823.

'Those who know you, know well what you are,' said he gaily, 'and why should you care about those who do not know you?'

In the last ten years the old woman's face had acquired

the mellow tone of an Easter pippin. Her wrinkles had become set in the full flesh that had grown cold and pulpy. Her eyes, full of sparkle still, seemed animated by a youthful and eager thought, which might the more easily be regarded as one of greed, because there is always some little greed in a gambler. Her plump features betrayed deep dissimulation, and a dominant idea buried far down in her heart. Her passion required secretiveness. The movement of her lips gave a hint of gluttony. Thus, though she was in fact the worthy and kind-hearted woman we have seen, the eye might be mistaken in her. She was a perfect model for the old woman Joseph wished to represent.

Coralie, a young actress of exquisite beauty, who died in the bloom of her youth, the mistress of a friend of Bridau's, Lucien de Rubempré, a young poet, had given him the idea of this subject. This fine work was sometimes called an imitation, but it was a splendid scene as a setting for three portraits. Michel Chrestien, a youthful member of the Artistic Society, had lent his Republican countenance as a model for the senator, and Joseph gave it some touches of maturity, as he slightly exaggerated the expression of Madame Descoings' face.

This great picture, which was to become so famous, and to give rise to so much animosity, jealousy, and admiration, was only begun; Joseph, compelled to suspend his work on it, and to execute commissions for a living, was busy copying pictures by the old masters, thus studying all their methods; no painter handles his brush more learnedly. His good sense as an artist had counselled him to conceal from Madame Descoings and from his mother the amount of money he was beginning to make, seeing that each had a road to ruin—one in Philippe, and the other in the lottery. The peculiar coolness shown by the soldier in his downfall, the way in which he had counted on his pretended purpose of suicide—which Joseph had seen through—the mistakes

he had made in the career he ought never to have abandoned, in short, the smallest details of his conduct, had at last opened Joseph's eyes.

Such insight is rarely lacking in painters. Occupied day after day in the silence of the studio, in work which leaves the mind, to a certain extent, free, they grow in some sort womanly; their thoughts wander round the small facts of life, and detect their covert meaning.

Joseph had bought a fine old cabinet—they were yet the fashion—to decorate a corner of his studio, where the light played on the panels in relief, and gave lustre to a masterpiece of some sixteenth-century craftsman. Inside it he found a secret drawer, where he hoarded a small sum in case of need. With the easy trustfulness of an artist, he was accustomed to keep the cash he allowed himself for pocket-money in a skull that lay on one of the divisions of this cabinet; but, since his brother's return, he found a constant discrepancy between the sums he spent and the balance left. The hundred francs a month melted with extraordinary rapidity. On finding nothing when he had spent but forty or fifty francs, the first time he said to himself, 'My money has gone travelling post, it would seem!' The next time he carefully noted his expenses; but in vain did he count, like Robert Macaire, 'Sixteen and five make twenty-three,' it would not come right.

On finding it a third time still more seriously wrong, he mentioned the painful subject to his Maman Descoings, who loved him, as he felt, with that maternal affection, tender, trusting, credulous, and enthusiastic, which his mother did not feel, however kind she might be, and which is as needful to an artist at the opening of his career as a hen's care is to her chicks till they are fledged. To her only could he confide his horrible suspicions. He was as sure of his friends as of himself; Madame Descoings would certainly never take anything to risk in the lottery; and the poor soul wrung her hands at the

thought as he said, 'Only Philippe could commit this petty household theft.'

'Why does not he ask me for what he wants?' exclaimed Joseph, mixing the paints on his palette in utter confusion of colours, without heeding what he was doing. 'Should I refuse to give him money?'

'But it is robbing an infant!' cried the old woman, with horror expressed in her face.

'No,' replied Joseph, 'he can have it; he is my brother; my purse is his; but he ought to ask me.'

'Place a fixed sum of money there this morning and don't touch it,' said Madame Descoings; 'I shall know who comes to the studio, and if nobody comes in but Philippe you will know for certain.'

Thus, by next day, Joseph had proof of the forced loans levied on him by his brother. Philippe came up to the studio in his brother's absence and took the little cash he needed. The artist feared for his little hoard.

'Wait a bit, wait a bit, I will catch you out, my fine rascal!' said he to Madame Descoings with a laugh.

'Quite right; we ought to punish him, for I have found a deficit occasionally in my own purse. But, poor boy, he must have his tobacco; he has made a habit of it.'

'Poor boy! and poor boy indeed!' retorted the artist. 'I am beginning to agree with Fulgence and Bixiou—Philippe is always dragging at us. First he gets mixed up in a riot, and has to be sent to America, and that costs my mother twelve thousand francs; then he has not the wit to find anything in the wilds of the New World, and it costs just as much to get him home again; under the pretext of having repeated two words from Napoleon to a general, he believes himself a great soldier, and bound to sulk with the Bourbons; meanwhile he can travel, and amuse himself, and see the world! I am not to be caught with such bird-lime as the story of

his woes; he does not look like a man who has not made himself comfortable wherever he was!

'Then my fine fellow has a capital place found for him; he lives like Sardanapalus with an opera girl, robs the till of a newspaper, and costs his mother another twelve thousand francs. Certainly, so far as I am concerned, what need I care? But Philippe will bring the poor mother to want. He treats me like the dirt under his feet because I never was in the Dragoon Guards! And it will be my part, perhaps, to maintain that poor dear mother in her old age, while, if he goes on as he has begun, the retired officer will end I don't know where.

'Bixiou said to me, "Your brother is a nice rogue!" Well, your grandson is right; Philippe will play some reckless trick yet that will compromise the honour of the family, and then there will be ten or twelve thousand francs more to pay! He gambles every evening; when he comes in as drunk as a lord he drops pricked cards on the stairs, on which he has noted the turns of red and black. Old Desroches is doing all he can to get Philippe reinstated in the army; but, for my part, I believe he would be in despair at having to serve again. Could you have believed that a boy with such beautiful clear blue eyes, and a look like the Chevalier Bayard, would ever have turned out such a scoundrel?'

Notwithstanding the caution and coolness with which Philippe staked his money every evening, he was occasionally cleaned out, as players say. Then, prompted by an irresistible craving to have his stake for the evening, ten francs, he helped himself in the house to his brother's money, to any Madame Descoings might leave about, or to his mother's. Once already the poor widow had seen through her first sleep a terrible vision: Philippe had come into her room and emptied the pocket of her dress of all the money in it. She had pretended

to be asleep, but she had spent the rest of that night in tears. She saw the truth. 'One fault does not constitute a vice,' Madame Descoings had said; but after constant lapses the vice was plainly visible. Agathe could no longer doubt; her best-beloved son had neither feeling nor honour.

The day after this dreadful vision, before Philippe went out after breakfast, she called him into her room and besought him in suppliant tones to ask her for the money he should need. But his demands became so frequent that now, for above a fortnight, Agathe's savings had been exhausted. She had not a farthing; she thought of seeking work. For several evenings she had discussed with Madame Descoings the means of making money by her needle; indeed, the poor mother had already asked at a shop—Le Père de Famille—for fancy-work to fill in, an employment by which she might earn about a franc a day. In spite of her niece's absolute secrecy, the old woman had easily guessed the reasons for this eagerness to make money by such feminine arts. Indeed, the change in Agathe's appearance was sufficiently eloquent; her fresh complexion was faded, the skin was drawn over the temples and cheek-bones, her forehead was seamed, her eyes lost their lustre, some inward fire was evidently consuming her, and she spent the night in tears.

But what most deeply ravaged her was the necessity for silence as to her pain, her anxieties, and her apprehensions. She never went to sleep till Philippe had come in; she listened for him in the street; she had studied the differences in his voice, in his step, in the very tone of his cane rattling on the paving-stones. She knew everything, exactly the degree of intoxication that he had reached, quaking as she heard him stumble on the stairs. One night she had picked up some gold pieces on the spot where he had let himself fall. When he had drunk and won, his voice was husky and his stick dragged; but when he had lost, there was something

short, crisp, and furious in his footstep; he would sing a tune in a clear voice, and carry his cane shouldered like a musket. At breakfast, if he had been winning, his expression was cheerful and almost affectionate; he jested coarsely, still he jested, with Madame Descoings, with Joseph, and his mother; if he had lost, on the contrary, he was morose, his speech was curt and sharp, his gaze hard, and his gloom quite alarming.

This life of debauchery and the habit of drink left their mark day by day on the countenance that had once been so handsome. The veins in his face were purple, his features grew thick, his eyes lost their lashes, and looked dry. And then Philippe, careless of his person, carried with him the miasma of smoke and spirits, and a smell of muddy boots, which to a stranger would have seemed the last stamp of squalor.

'You ought to have a complete new suit of clothes from head to foot,' said Madame Descoings to Philippe one day early in December.

'And who is to pay for them?' said he bitterly. 'My poor mother has not a sou; I have five hundred francs a year. It would cost a year's pension to buy me an outfit, and I have pledged it for three years to come . . .'

'What for?' said Joseph.

'A debt of honour. Giroudeau borrowed a thousand francs from Florentine to lend to me.—I am not well got up, it must be confessed; but when you remember that Napoleon is at St. Helena, and sells his plate to buy food, the soldiers that remain faithful to him may very well walk in boot-tops,' said he, showing his boots without heels, and he walked off.

'He is not a bad fellow,' said Agathe; 'he has good feelings.'

'He may love the Emperor and still keep himself clean,' said Joseph. 'If he took some care of himself and his clothes, he would look less like a tramp.'

'Joseph, you ought to be indulgent to your brother,'

said Agathe. 'You can do just what you like, while he certainly is out of his place.'

'And why did he leave it?' asked Joseph. 'What does it matter whether the flag shows Louis XVIII.'s bugs or Napoleon's cockyoly bird if the bunting flies for France? France is France! I would paint for the devil. A soldier ought to fight, if he is a soldier, for love of the art. If he had stayed quietly in the army, by this time he would be a general.'

'You are unjust,' said Agathe. 'Your father, who adored the Emperor, would have approved of what he did. However, he agrees to rejoin the army. God alone knows what it costs your brother to commit what he considers an act of treason.'

Joseph rose to go up to his studio; but Agathe took his hand, saying—

'Be good to your brother; he is so unfortunate.'

When the artist entered his studio, followed by Madame Descoings, who begged him to spare his mother's feelings, remarking how much she was altered, and what acute mental suffering this alteration betrayed, they found Philippe there, to their great surprise.

'Joseph, my boy,' said he in an airy way, 'I am desperately in want of money. By the piper! I owe thirty francs for cigars at the tobacconist's, and I dare not pass the cursed shop without paying. I have promised to pay at least ten times.'

'All right! I like this way best,' said Joseph. 'Take it out of the death's head.'

'Oh, I took all that last night after dinner.'

'There were forty-five francs——'

'That is just what I made it,' replied Philippe. 'I found them there. Was that wrong?' he asked.

'No, my dear fellow, no,' said the artist. 'If you were rich, I should do as you do; only, before helping myself, I should ask if it were convenient to you.'

'It is very humiliating to have to ask,' replied Philippe.

'I would sooner you should take it as I do, and say nothing. It shows more confidence. In the army, when a comrade dies, if he has a good pair of boots and you have a bad pair, you exchange with him.'

'Yes, but you don't take them while he is alive!'

'A mere quibble!' retorted Philippe with a shrug. 'So you have no money?'

'No,' said Joseph, determined not to show his hoard.

'In a few days we shall all be rich,' said the old woman.

'Oh yes! You really believe that your three numbers will come out on the 25th at the Paris drawing! You must put in a large stake if you mean to make us all rich.'

'A natural ternion for two hundred francs will bring out three millions, to say nothing of the doublets and the single drawings.'

'At fifteen thousand times the stake—yes, it is exactly two hundred francs!' cried Philippe.

The old woman bit her lip; she had dropped an imprudent hint.

In fact, as he went downstairs, Philippe was asking himself:—

'Where has that old witch hidden the money for her lottery tickets? It is sheer waste of money, and I could make such good use of it! On four stakes of fifty francs each I might make two hundred thousand francs. And it is far more certain than the drawing of three numbers in a lottery!'

He wondered where Madame Descoings would be likely to hide her hoard.

On the eve of the great Church Festivals, Agathe always went to church and stayed there a long time, at confession no doubt, and in preparing for Communion. It was now Christmas Eve. Madame Descoings would certainly go out to buy some extra treat for supper, but perhaps she would pay for her ticket at the same time. The lottery was drawn every five days, on the wheels,

in turn, of Bordeaux, Lyons, Lille, Strasbourg, and Paris. The Paris drawing took place on the 25th of each month; the lists were closed at midnight on the 24th. The soldier studied the case, and set himself to watch.

At about noon Philippe came in. Madame Descoings was gone out, but she had taken the door-key. This was no difficulty. Philippe, saying that he had forgotten something, begged the woman at the lodge to go to fetch a locksmith, who lived close by in the Rue Guénégaud, and who opened the door. Philippe's first idea was to search the bed; he unmade it, felt the mattresses before examining the frame, and in the bottom mattress he felt the gold pieces wrapped in paper. He had soon unsewn the ticking and picked out twenty napoleons; then, without wasting time in sewing it up again, he remade the bed neatly enough to prevent the old woman's observing anything wrong.

The gambler made off on a light foot, intending to play three times, at intervals of three hours, and for ten minutes only each time. The great gamblers, ever since 1786, when the gambling-houses were first opened, the formidable gamblers who were the terror of the bank, and who fairly ate money at the tables, to use the familiar expression in such places, never played by any other rule. But before achieving this experience they lost fortunes. All the philosophy of those who farmed the concern and all their profit was derived from the rules; from the non-liability of the bank; from ties called draws, of which half the winnings remained in its possession; and from the villainous fraud authorised by the State, which made it optional to take or reject the players' stakes. In a word, the bank, while refusing to play with a rich and cool hand, devoured the whole fortune of any player who was so persistently foolish as to allow himself to be intoxicated by the rapid whirl of its machinery, for the dealers at trente-et-quarante worked almost as fast as the roulette could.

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Philippe had at last succeeded in acquiring that presence of mind which enables a commander-in-chief to keep a keen eye and a calm brain in the midst of the whirligig of things. He had achieved those high politics of gambling which, it may be said incidentally, enabled a thousand men in Paris to look night after night into a gulf without turning giddy.

With these four hundred francs Philippe was determined to make his fortune in the course of the day. He hid two hundred francs in his boots, and kept two hundred in his pocket. By three o'clock he was at the gambling-house, where the Palais-Royal theatre now stands, where the bankers commonly held the largest reserve. Half an hour after he came out, having won seven thousand francs. He went to see Florentine, paid her five hundred francs that he owed her, and invited her to supper after the play at the Rocher de Cancale. On his way back, he went through the Rue du Sentier to tell his friend Giroudeau of the projected festivity.

At six o'clock Philippe had won twenty-five thousand francs, and at the end of ten minutes kept his word to himself and went away. In the evening, at ten, he had won seventy-five thousand francs. After the supper, which was splendid, Philippe, drunk and confident, returned to the tables at about midnight. Then, against the rule he had made, he played for an hour and doubled his winnings. The bank, from whom his mode of play had wrung a hundred and fifty thousand francs, watched him with curiosity.

'Will he go away or will he stay?' the men asked each other by a glance. 'If he stays, he is done for.'

Philippe believed that luck was with him, and stayed. At three in the morning the hundred and fifty thousand francs had returned to the cash-box.

The Colonel, who had drunk a good deal of grog while playing, went out in a state of intoxication, which the nipping cold aggravated to the utmost; but a waiter

followed him, picked him up, and carried him to one of the horrible places where, inscribed on a lamp, the notice may be read, 'Beds by the night.' The waiter paid for the ruined gambler, who was laid on a bed in his clothes, and remained there till Christmas night. The managers of the gambling-houses treated regular customers and high players with respect.

Philippe did not wake till seven that evening, his mouth furred, his face swelled, and racked with nervous fever. His strong constitution enabled him to get on foot to his mother's home, whither he had unwittingly brought sorrow, despair, ruin, and death.

The day before, when dinner was ready, Madame Descoings and Agathe waited two hours for Philippe. They did not sit down till seven o'clock. Agathe almost always went to her room at ten; but as she wished to attend midnight mass, she went to lie down directly after dinner. The old aunt and Joseph remained together in the little sitting-room which now served all purposes, and she begged him to work out the sum of her much-talked-of stake, her monster stake on the famous ternion. She meant to go for the double numbers and first drawings, so as to combine all the chances. After smacking her lips over the poetry of this master-stroke, and pouring out both cornucopias at the feet of her adopted favourite; after telling him all her dreams, proving that she could not fail to win, wondering only how she should endure such good fortune, or wait for it from midnight till ten next morning, Joseph, who did not see where the four hundred francs were to come from, mentioned the matter. The old woman smiled and led him into the old drawing-room, now her bedroom.

'You will see!' said she.

Madame Descoings hastily stripped her bed, and went for her scissors to unstitch the mattress; she put on her spectacles, looked at the ticking, and found it unsewn.

On hearing the old woman heave a sigh that came from the depths of her bosom, and seemed choked by the blood rushing to her heart, Joseph instinctively held out his arms to the poor old lottery-gambler, and laid her senseless on a chair, calling to his mother to come. Agathe sprang up, put on her dressing-gown, and hurried in; by the light of a tallow candle she applied every common remedy for a fainting fit—eau de Cologne on her aunt's temples, cold water on her forehead, burnt feathers under her nose; at last she saw her revive.

'They were there this morning; he has taken them—that wretch!'

'What?' asked Joseph.

'I had twenty louis in my mattress, my savings for two years. Only Philippe can have taken them . . .'

'But when?' cried the mother, quite crushed; 'he has not been in since breakfast.'

'I should be glad to be mistaken,' said the old woman. 'But this morning, in Joseph's studio, when I spoke of my stake in the lottery I had a warning. I was wrong not to go down and take out my little lucky-penny and put it into the lottery at once. I meant to do it, and I forget what hindered me.—Good God! And I went to buy cigars for him!'

'But,' said Joseph, 'our front-door was locked. Besides, it is so vile that I will not believe it. Philippe watched you out, unsewed your mattress, premeditated—! No.'

'I felt them there this morning when I made my bed after breakfast,' said Madame Descoings.

Agathe, quite horror-stricken, went downstairs to ask whether her son had come in during the day, and the doorkeeper told her Philippe's fable. The mother, struck to the heart, came up again completely altered. As white as her cotton shift, she walked as we fancy ghosts may walk, noiselessly, slowly, as if by the impulse of a superhuman power, and yet almost mechanically.

She held a candle in her hand, which lighted up her face and her eyes fixed in despair. Without knowing it, she had pushed her hair over her brow with her hands, and this detail made her so beautiful in her horror that Joseph stood riveted by this image of anguish, this vision of a statue of terror and dejection.

'Aunt,' said she, 'take my spoons and forks; I have six sets, that will make up the sum, for it was I who took it for Philippe; I thought I could replace it before you should find it out. Oh! I have suffered——!'

She sat down. Her dry fixed gaze wavered a little then.

'It is he who has done the trick,' said Madame Descoings in an undertone to Joseph.

'No, no,' repeated Agathe. 'Take the silver, sell it; it is of no use to me; we can use yours.'

She went into her room, took up the plate-box, found it very light, opened it, and saw a pawn-ticket. The poor mother gave a dreadful cry. Joseph and Madame Descoings hastened in, glanced at the box, and the mother's heroic falsehood was in vain. They all three stood silent, avoiding even a glance. At that moment, with a gesture almost of madness, Agathe laid her finger on her lips to seal the secret which no one would divulge. Then all three went back to the sitting-room fire.

'I tell you, my children, I am heartbroken,' said Madame Descoings. 'My numbers will be drawn, I am quite positive! I am not thinking of myself, but of you two!—Philippe is a monster,' she went on, turning to her niece. 'He does not love you, in spite of all you have done for him. If you do not find some means to protect yourself, the wretch will turn you into the street. Promise me to sell your stock, realise the capital, and sink it in an annuity. By taking that step you will never be a burden on Joseph. Monsieur Desroches wants to set up his son in an office, and the boy' (he

was now six-and-twenty) 'has found one. He will take your twelve thousand francs and pay you an annuity.'

Joseph seized his mother's candlestick and hurried up to the studio; he came down with three hundred francs.

'Here, Maman Descoings,' said he, offering her his little hoard, it is no business of ours to inquire what you do with your money; we owe you what is missing, and here it is—almost all of it.'

'I!—take your little treasure, the result of your privations, which distress me so much! Are you mad, Joseph?' cried the old woman, evidently torn by her stupid belief in the luck of her numbers in the State lottery, and what seemed to her the sacrilege of such a proceeding.

'Oh! do what you will with it,' said Agathe, moved to tears by this action of her true son's.

Madame Descoings took Joseph's head in her hands and kissed his forehead.

'My child, do not tempt me,' she said; 'I should only lose it. The lottery is a fool's game!'

Never was anything so heroical said in any of the obscure dramas of private life. Was it not, in fact, the triumph of affection over an inveterate vice?

At this minute the bells began to toll for midnight mass.

'Besides, it is too late,' added the old woman.

'Oh!' cried Joseph; 'here are your cabalistic calculations.'

The magnanimous artist seized the tickets, flew downstairs, and away to pay the stake. When he was gone, Agathe and Madame Descoings melted into tears.

'He is gone!' exclaimed the old gambler. 'But it will all be his, for it is his money.'

Joseph, unluckily, did not in the least know where to find the lottery-ticket offices, which those who frequented them knew as well in Paris as, in these days,

smokers know the tobacco shops. The painter rushed wildly on, looking at the lamp signs. When he asked some one he met to tell him where there was a lottery-office, he was told that they were closed, but that one by the steps of the Palais Royal sometimes remained open a little later. The artist flew to the Palais Royal; the office was shut.

'Two minutes sooner and you could have paid in your stake,' said one of the ticket-criers who stood at the bottom of the steps, shouting these strange words, 'Twelve hundred francs for forty sous!' and selling ready numbered tickets.

By the glimmer of a street lamp and the lights in the Café de la Rotonde, Joseph examined these tickets to see whether by chance either of them bore Madame Descoings' pet numbers; but he could not find one, and returned home in grief at having done in vain all that lay in his power to please the old woman, to whom he related his disappointments.

Agathe and her aunt went off to mass at Saint-Germain-des-Prés. Joseph went to bed. No one kept Christmas Eve. Madame Descoings had lost her head; Agathe's heart was for ever broken.

The two women rose late. Ten o'clock was striking when Madame Descoings bestirred herself to get breakfast, which was not ready till half-past eleven. By that time the long frames hanging outside the lottery-ticket offices showed an array of figures. If Madame Descoings had had her ticket, she would have gone by half-past nine o'clock to the Rue neuve des Petits Champs to learn her fate, which was decided in a house next door to the offices of the Minister of Finance, on a spot now occupied by the Square and the Ventadour theatre.

Every time the lottery was drawn, the curious could see at the door of this building a *posse* of old women, cooks, and old men, who at that time constituted as strange a spectacle as that of the stock-holders forming

a queue on the day when dividends are paid at the Treasury.

'Well, so you are rolling in riches!' exclaimed old Desroches, coming in just as Madame Descoings was swallowing her last mouthful of coffee.

'How?' cried poor Agathe.

'Her three numbers have come out,' said he, holding out a list of numbers written on a scrap of paper, such as office clerks kept by the hundred in the paper-tray on their desks.

Joseph read the list. Agathe read the list. Madame Descoings read nothing. She fell back as if stricken by lightning; seeing her face change and hearing her cry, old Desroches and Joseph carried her to her bed. Agathe went for a doctor. The poor woman had fallen in a fit of apoplexy, and she did not recover consciousness till about four in the afternoon. Old Doctor Haudry, her physician, pronounced that, notwithstanding this amelioration, she would do well to settle her affairs and think of her religious duties. She had uttered but two words, 'Three millions!'

Old Desroches, to whom Joseph explained the circumstances with the necessary reservations, spoke of numbers of lottery-gamblers who had in the same way missed a fortune on the day when by some fatality they had failed to pay up their stakes; still, he understood how mortal a blow this must be after twenty years of perseverance.

At five o'clock, when perfect silence reigned in the little dwelling, and when the dying woman, watched by Joseph at the foot of her bed, and Agathe at her pillow, was expecting her grandson, whom Desroches had gone to seek, the sound of Philippe's step and walking-stick echoed on the stairs.

'There he is, there he is!' cried Madame Descoings, sitting up in bed, and suddenly recovering the use of her paralysed tongue.

Agathe and Joseph were impressed by the impulse of horror which so vehemently roused the sick woman. Their miserable expectations were wholly justified by Philippe's appearance : by his purple, vacant face, his uncertain gait, and the horrible look of his eyes with deep red rims, glazed and yet wild-looking ; he was shivering violently with fever, and his teeth chattered.

'What the devil!' he exclaimed. 'Neither bit nor sup, and my throat is on fire. Well, what 's up now? The foul fiend puts his hoof in all that concerns us. My old Descoings in bed, and making eyes at me as big as saucers——'

'Be silent, sir,' said Agathe, rising. 'At least you may respect the misery you have caused.'

'Hallo! *Sir?*' said he, looking at his mother. 'My dear little mother, that is not kind ; do you no longer love your boy?'

'Are you worthy to be loved? Have you forgotten what you did yesterday? You may look out for a lodging for yourself; you shall no longer live with me. From to-morrow,' she added, 'for in such a state as you are in it would be difficult——'

'To turn me out?—So you are going to play the melodrama of the Banished Son?' he went on. 'Dear, dear! Is that how you take it? Well, you are all a pretty pack of owls! What harm have I done? Cleaned out the old woman's mattress for her. We don't keep money in wool, deuce take it.—And where is the crime? Did not she take twenty thousand francs, I should like to know? Are not we her creditors? I have taken so much on account; that 's all.'

'Oh, God! oh, God!' cried the dying woman, clasping her hands in prayer.

'Hold your tongue!' said Joseph, rushing at his brother and clapping his hand over his mouth.

'Right about face, half turn to the left, you dirty little painter!' replied Philippe, laying his heavy hand

on Joseph's shoulder, turning him round, and landing him in an armchair. 'That is not the way to meddle with the moustache of a Major of Dragoons of the Imperial Guard.'

'She has repaid me all she owed me,' cried Agathe, rising and turning an angry face to her son. 'Besides, that is nobody's business but mine. You are killing her. Go,' she added with a gesture that exhausted all her force, 'and never let me see you again. You are a villain!'

'I am killing her?'

'Yes; her numbers were drawn in the lottery, and you stole the money she would have staked.'

'Oh, if she is dying of a lost chance, then it is not I who am killing her,' retorted the drunkard.

'Go, I say,' said Agathe; 'you fill me with horror. You have every vice! Good God, and is this my son?'

A hollow croak from Madame Descoings' throat had aggravated Agathe's wrath.

'And yet I still love you, mother, though you are the cause of all my misfortunes,' said Philippe. 'And you can turn me out of doors on a Christmas Day, the birthday of What d'ye call him—Jesus!—What did you do to grandpapa Rouget, your father, that he turned you out and disinherited you? If you had not offended him in some way, we should have been rich, and I should not have been reduced to the depths of misery. What did you do to your father, I should like to know, you who are so good? You see, I may be a very good boy, and be turned out of doors nevertheless—I, the glory of the family——'

'Its disgrace!' cried Madame Descoings.

'Leave the room, or kill me!' cried Joseph, rushing on his brother with the fury of a lion.

'Good God! good God!' cried Agathe, trying to separate the brothers.

At this moment Bixiou and Doctor Haudry came in.

Joseph had knocked down his brother, and Philippe was lying on the floor.

'He is a perfect wild beast!' he said. Not a word, or I'll——'

'I will remember this,' bellowed Philippe.

'A little family difference?' said Bixiou.

'Pick him up,' said the physician; 'he is as ill as the old lady; undress him, put him to bed, and pull his boots off.'

'That is easily said,' observed Bixiou. 'But they must be cut off: his legs are swelled——'

Agathe brought a pair of scissors. When she had slit the boots, which at that time were worn outside tight-fitting trousers, ten gold pieces rolled out on to the floor.

'There—there is her money,' muttered Philippe. 'Blasted idiot that I am, I forgot the reserve fund! So I too missed fire!'

The delirium of high fever now came upon Philippe, who began to talk wildly. Joseph, with the help of the elder Desroches, who came in presently, and of Bixiou, got the wretched man up to his own room. Doctor Haudry was obliged to write a line begging the loan of a strait-waistcoat from the hospital, for his mania increased to such a pitch that they feared he might kill himself—he was like a madman.

By nine o'clock peace was restored. The Abbé Loraux and Desroches did what they could to comfort Agathe, who sat by her aunt's pillow, and never ceased crying; but she only listened and shook her head, preserving obstinate silence; only Joseph and Madame Descoings knew the depth and extent of the inward wound.

'He will do better, mother,' said Joseph at last, when Desroches and Bixiou were gone.

'Oh!' cried the poor woman, 'but he is right. Philippe is right! My father cursed me; I have no right. . . . Here is the money,' she went on to Madame

Descoings, adding Joseph's three hundred francs to the two hundred found in Philippe's possession. 'Go and see if your brother wants something to drink,' she said to Joseph.

'Will you keep a promise made to a dying woman?' asked the old woman, feeling that her mind was going.

'Yes, aunt.'

'Then swear to me to hand over your money to that young Desroches for an annuity. You will miss my little income, and from all I hear you say I know you will let that wretch squeeze you to the last sou——'

'Aunt, I swear it.'

The old woman died on the 31st December, five days after the fatal blow so innocently dealt her by the elder Desroches. The five hundred francs, all the money there was in the house, barely sufficed to pay the expenses of her funeral. She left a very little plate and furniture, of which Madame Bridau paid the value to her grandson.

Reduced now to eight hundred francs a year, the annuity paid her by the younger Desroches—who concluded the purchase of a business, at present without clients, and took her twelve thousand francs as capital—Agathe gave up her rooms on the third floor and sold all but the most necessary furniture. When, at the end of a month, Philippe was convalescent, his mother coldly explained to him that the expenses of his illness had absorbed all her ready money; henceforth she must work for her living, and she entreated him in the most affectionate manner to rejoin the army and provide for himself.

'You might have saved yourself your sermon,' said Philippe, looking at his mother with eyes cold from utter indifference. 'I have very clearly seen that neither you nor my brother love me in the least. I am alone in the world now! Well, I prefer it so.'

'Prove yourself worthy to be loved,' replied the poor

mother, wounded to the quick, 'and we shall love you again.'

'Fiddlesticks!' said he, interrupting her.

He took his old hat, all worn at the edges, and his stick, stuck the hat over his ear, and went downstairs whistling.

'Philippe! where are you off to without any money?' cried his mother, who could not restrain her tears. 'Here——'

She held out a hundred francs done up in paper. Philippe came up the steps he had gone down and took the money.

'And you do not kiss me?' said she, melting into tears.

He clasped her to his breast, without any of the effusive feeling which alone gives value to a kiss.

'And where are you going?' said Agathe.

'To Florentine, Giroudeau's mistress. They really are friends!' he replied coarsely.

He went. Agathe returned to her room, her knees quaking, her eyes dim, her heart in a vice. She fell on her knees, besought God to protect her unnatural son, and abdicated the burthen of motherhood.

In February 1822 Madame Bridau had established herself in the bedroom formerly occupied by Philippe, over the kitchen of her third-floor rooms. The painter's bedroom and studio were on the opposite side of the landing. Seeing his mother reduced so low, Joseph was determined that she should be as comfortable as possible. After his brother had left he took the arrangement of the attic in hand, and gave it an artistic stamp. He put in a carpet; the bed, very simply arranged, but with exquisite taste, had a character of monastic simplicity. The walls, hung with cheap chintz, judiciously chosen of a colour to harmonise with the furniture, which was cleaned to look like new, made the little room look neat and elegant. He had a door made to shut in the landing,

and hung it with a curtain. The window was screened by a blind that subdued the light, Thus, though the poor mother's life was restricted to the simplest expression which a woman's life in Paris can be reduced to, Agathe was at any rate better off than anybody in a similar position, thanks to her son.

To spare his mother the worst fatigues of housekeeping, Joseph took her to dine every day at a *table d'hôte* in the Rue de Beaune frequented by ladies of respectability, deputies, and men of title, where the charge for each person was ninety francs a month. Agathe, having only the breakfast to provide, fell into the same habits for her son as she had kept up for his father. In spite of Joseph's pious fibs, she somehow found out that her dinner cost about a hundred francs a month. Horrified by this enormous expenditure, and never supposing that her son could earn much by 'painting naked women,' by the influence of her director, the Abbé Loraux, she obtained the promise of a place with seven hundred francs a year, in a lottery-ticket office granted by Government to the Comtesse de Bauvan, the widow of a Chouan leader.

These lottery offices, bestowed on widows who had friends at Court, not unfrequently were the whole support of a family who managed the business of it. But, under the Restoration, the difficulty of finding rewards in the gift of a constitutional Government for all the services that had been done, led to the practice of giving to impoverished ladies of rank not one, but two, such lottery-ticket offices, of which the emoluments might be from six to ten thousand francs. In such cases the widow of a general or a nobleman did not keep the ticket-office herself; she had managers with a sort of partnership. When these managers were unmarried men they could not help having a clerk under them, for the office always had to be kept open till midnight, and the accounts required by the Minister of Finance were very elaborate.

The Comtesse de Bauvan, to whom the Abbé Loraux explained Madame Bridau's position, promised that if her present manager should leave, Agathe should have the reversion; meanwhile she bargained for a salary of six hundred francs for the widow. Compelled to be at her work by ten in the morning, poor Agathe had scarcely time to dine; she returned to her office at seven in the evening, and never stirred out again before midnight. Never once for two years did Joseph fail to call for his mother and take her home, and he often fetched her to dinner. His friends would see him leave the Opera, the Italiens, or the most splendid drawing-rooms, to be in the Rue Vivienne before midnight.

Agathe soon fell into the monotonously regular way of life, which often is a comfort and support to sorrow-stricken souls. In the morning, after tidying her room, where there were now no cats or little birds, she cooked the breakfast at a corner of her fireplace, and laid it in the studio, where she ate it with her son. She then arranged Joseph's bedroom, took off her fire, and brought her sewing into the studio, sitting by the little stove, and leaving the room if he had a visitor or a model. Though she knew nothing of art or its processes, she liked the stillness of the place. In this matter she made no advance; she affected nothing; she was always greatly astonished at the importance attached to colour, composition, and drawing. When one of the members of Joseph's little club, or one of his artist friends, was discussing such matters—Schinner, Pierre Grassou, or Léon de Lora, a very young student then known by the name of Mistigris—she would come and look on attentively, and never discover what could give occasion to such big words and hot arguments.

She made her son's linen, mended his stockings and socks; she even went so far as to clean his pallette, collect his painting-rags, and keep the studio in order. And seeing his mother so intelligently careful of these little

details, Joseph loaded her with kindness. If the mother and son did not meet half-way on questions of art, they were closely united by affection.

The mother had a scheme. One morning when she had made much of Joseph while he was sketching an enormous picture—which he subsequently painted, but which fell flat—she ventured to say aloud—

'Oh, dear! I wonder what he is doing?'

'Who?'

'Philippe.'

'By Jove! the fellow is having a hard time. It will do him good.'

'But he has had hard times before, and perhaps that was what spoilt him for us. If he were happy, he would be good.'

'My dear mother, you fancy that he was in distress while he was away, but you are mistaken; he lived at his ease in New York, as he still does here——'

'But if he were in want, near us, that would be dreadful——'

'Yes,' said Joseph; 'and for my part, I am willing to give him money, but I will not see him. He killed poor Aunt Descoings.'

'Then you would not paint his portrait?'

'For you, mother, I would suffer martyrdom. I would remember only the one fact that he is my brother.'

'His portrait as a Captain of Dragoons, on horseback?'

'Well, I have a fine horse there, copied from Gros, and I do not know what to do with it.'

'Then go to his friend and find out what is become of him.'

'I will.'

Agathe rose; her scissors, everything fell on the floor; she came to kiss Joseph on his forehead and shed two tears on his hair.

'That boy is your passion,' said he. 'We all have our ill-starred passion!'

That evening Joseph went to the Rue du Sentier at about four o'clock, and there he found his brother, filling Giroudeau's place. The elder captain of Dragoons had been transferred as cashier to a weekly paper managed by his nephew. Though Finot was still proprietor of the little daily paper for which he had issued shares, though the shares were all in his own hands, the ostensible owner and editor was a friend of his named Lousteau, the son, as it happened, of the sub-delegate from Issoudun on whom Bridau's grandfather (Doctor Rouget) had wanted to be revenged, and consequently Madame Hochon's nephew.

To oblige his uncle, Finot had given him Philippe as deputy, paying him, however, only half the salary. Every day at five o'clock Giroudeau checked the balance and carried off the money taken during the day. Coloquinte, the old soldier who served as messenger, and who ran the errands, also kept an eye on Major Philippe. Philippe, however, was behaving himself. A salary of six hundred francs and a pension of five hundred were enough for him to live on, all the more because a fire was provided for him during the day, and in the evenings he could go to the play on the free list, so he had nothing to pay for but food and lodging. Coloquinte was going out, loaded with stamped papers, and Philippe was brushing his green linen office cuffs, when Joseph walked in.

'Lord! Here is the brat,' said Philippe. 'Well, we will dine together; you shall come to the Opera, Florine and Florentine have a box. I am going with Giroudeau; you will be of the party, and I will introduce you to Nathan.'

He took up his loaded cane, and wetted the end of a cigar.

'I cannot avail myself of your invitation; I must look after my mother. We dine at a *table d'hôte*.'

'Well, and how is she, poor dear thing?'

'She is pretty well,' said the painter. 'I have made a

new portrait of my father and one of Aunt Descoings. I have finished one of myself, and I should like to give my mother one of you in the uniform of the Imperial Dragoon Guards.'

'All right.'

'But you must come and sit——'

'I am obliged to be here, in this hen-coop, every day from nine till five.'

'Two Sundays will be enough.'

'All right, young 'un,' replied Napoleon's erewhile staff-officer, as he lighted his cigar at the porter's lamp.

When Joseph described Philippe's position to his mother, as they went together to their dinner in the Rue de Beaune, he felt her hand tremble on his arm; joy lighted up the faded face; the poor woman drew breath as though she had been relieved of some enormous burden. Next day she was full of little attentions for Joseph, prompted by her happiness and gratitude; she dressed his studio with flowers, and bought two vases.

The first Sunday when Philippe was to sit, Agathe took care to provide an excellent breakfast. She placed everything on the table, not forgetting a flask of brandy, not more than half full. She then hid herself behind a screen, in which she made a small hole. The ex-dragoon had sent his uniform the day before, and she could not refrain from hugging it. When Philippe mounted, in full dress, on one of the stuffed horses kept by saddlers, which Joseph had hired, Agathe, not to betray herself, was obliged to hide the slight noise of her weeping under the voices of the two brothers as they talked.

Philippe sat for two hours before and two hours after breakfast. At three in the afternoon he put on his ordinary dress, and, while smoking a cigar, again invited his brother to dine with him at the Palais Royal. He jingled the gold in his pockets.

'No,' said Joseph. 'You frighten me when I see you with gold about you.'

'By Heaven! Then you still have a bad opinion of me here?' roared the Lieutenant-Colonel in a voice of thunder. 'Do you think a man can never save?'

'No, no,' said Agathe, coming out of her hiding-place, and kissing her son. 'We will go and dine with him, Joseph.'

Joseph dared not scold his mother; he dressed, and Philippe took them to the Rue Montorgueuil, where, at the Rocher de Cancale, he gave them a splendid dinner, for which the bill ran up to a hundred francs.

'The Devil!' said Joseph uneasily. 'With a salary of eleven hundred francs a year you manage, like Ponchard in the *Dame Blanche*, to save enough to purchase an estate!'

'Pooh, I am in luck,' said the dragoon, who had drunk an enormous quantity of wine.

On hearing this speech, made on the doorstep just as they were getting into a hackney coach to go to the play—for Philippe had proposed to take his mother to the Circus, the only entertainment of the kind allowed her by her director—Joseph tightened his hand on his mother's arm. Agathe at once said she felt unwell, and declined to go to the theatre, so Philippe took her and his brother to the Rue Mazarine. When she found herself alone with Joseph in their attic, she sat long lost in thought.

On the next Sunday Philippe came again to sit. This time his mother sat in the room with the brothers. She brought in the breakfast, and could ask the trooper various questions. She then learnt that the nephew of her mother's old friend, Madame Hochon, figured in a small way in literature. Philippe and his ally Giroudeau lived in the society of journalists, actresses, and publishers, and, as cashiers, met with some respect. Philippe, who always took drams of kirsch while sitting after breakfast, talked freely. He boasted of becoming a person of importance again ere long. But at a question from Joseph as to his pecuniary means he kept silence.

As it happened, the next day was a great holiday, and the paper was not to come out, so Philippe, to get the thing done with, proposed to come and sit again on the morrow. Joseph explained to him that the Salon would open before long, that he had not money enough to buy frames for his pictures, and could only earn it by finishing a copy of a Rubens required by a picture-dealer named Magus. The original belonged to a rich Swiss banker, who had lent it only for ten days. Next day would be the last; it was therefore absolutely necessary to put off the sitting till the following Sunday.

'And that is it?' said Philippe, looking at a painting by Rubens that stood on an easel.

'Yes,' said Joseph. 'That is worth twenty thousand francs. That is what genius can do. There are such squares of canvas that are worth a hundred thousand francs.'

'Well, I like your copy best,' said the dragoon.

'It is fresher,' said Joseph, laughing; 'but my copy is only worth one thousand francs. I must have to-morrow to give the old tone and look of the original, that they may be indistinguishable.'

'Good-bye, mother,' said Philippe, embracing Agathe, 'till next Sunday.'

On the following day Elie Magus was to come for his copy. A friend of Joseph's, who often worked for the dealer, Pierre Grassou, wished to see the copy finished. To play him a trick, Joseph put his copy, glazed with a particular varnish, in the place of the original, which he set up on his easel. Pierre Grassou de Fougères was completely taken in, and amazed at this extraordinary imitation.

'Will you take in old Magus?' said Pierre Grassou.

'That remains to be seen,' said Joseph.

But the dealer did not come, and it was late. Agathe was to dine with Madame Desroches, who had just lost her husband; so Joseph proposed to Grassou to come

and dine at his *table d'hôte*. On going out he left the key of the studio, as he always did, with the woman who kept the house door.

'I am going to sit to my brother this evening,' said Philippe to this woman an hour later. 'He will be in presently, and I will wait for him in the studio.'

The woman gave him the key. Philippe went up, took the copy, thinking it was the original, came down, gave back the key, explaining that he had forgotten something, and went off with the Rubens to sell it for three thousand francs. He had taken the precaution of telling Elie Magus, from his brother, not to call till the next day. At night, when Joseph came in after fetching his mother from Madame Desroches', the porter told him of Philippe's vagaries, coming away almost as soon as he had gone in.

'If he has not had the good taste to take the copy, I am a ruined man!' exclaimed the painter, at once guessing the theft. He flew up the three flights of stairs and into the studio, and exclaimed, 'Thank God! He has been what he will be to the end—a fool and a knave.'

Agathe, who had followed Joseph, did not understand this exclamation; but when her son explained it, she simply stood still, dry-eyed.

'I have but one son!' she said in a weak voice.

'We have always avoided disgracing him before strangers,' replied Joseph. 'But we must now tell the porter he is never to be admitted. Henceforth we must carry our keys.—I will finish the portrait from memory, there is little to be done to it.'

'Leave it as it is; it would make me too unhappy,' replied his mother, stricken to the heart, and appalled by such meanness.

Philippe knew what the price of this copy was needed for, knew the gulf of difficulty into which he was flinging his brother, and nothing had deterred him. After

this last crime, Agathe would never mention Philippe; her face assumed a look of bitter, deep, and concentrated despair. One thought was killing her.

'Some day,' she said to herself, 'we shall see the name of Bridau in the criminal courts.'

Two months after this, just before Agathe entered on her duties at the lottery office, a soldier called one morning to see Madame Bridau, who was at breakfast with Joseph, announcing himself as a friend of Philippe's on urgent business.

When Giroudeau mentioned his name the mother and son quailed, all the more because the ex-dragoon had a rough, weather-beaten sailor's countenance that was anything rather than reassuring. His ashy grey eyes, his piebald moustache, the remaining tufts of hair brushed up round his butter-coloured bald head, had an indescribably unwholesome and licentious look. He wore an old iron-grey overcoat, with the rosette of an officer of the Legion of Honour; it was buttoned with difficulty over a stomach like a cook's, quite in keeping with a mouth that opened from ear to ear, and broad shoulders. This frame was carried on a pair of thin legs. His complexion, with the high colour on the cheek-bones, betrayed a jovial life. The lower part of his cheeks was deeply wrinkled, and overlapped his worn black velvet collar. Among other decorative touches, the ex-dragoon had in his ears an enormous pair of gold earrings.

'What a sot!' said Joseph to himself.

'Madame,' said Finot's uncle and cashier, 'your son is in such an unfortunate predicament that his friends cannot help applying to you to beg you to share the very considerable expenses he involves them in. He can no longer do his work for the paper; and Mademoiselle Florentine of the Porte Saint-Martin has given him a room in a miserable attic in the Rue Vendôme, where she lives. Philippe is dying; if you and his brother

cannot pay for the doctor and the medicine, we shall be obliged, for his own sake and cure, to have him taken to the Capucins. But we will keep him ourselves for three hundred francs; he must positively have a nurse; he goes out in the evening while Mademoiselle Florentine is at the theatre, and he takes irritant drinks, bad for his malady, and contrary to rule. And we are attached to him; it really makes us unhappy. The poor fellow has pledged his pension for three years; a substitute has been found for the moment to fill his place, and he gets no pay. But he will kill himself, Madame, if we cannot put him in the asylum kept by Doctor Dubois. It is a decent place, and the charge is ten francs a day. Florentine and I will pay for half a month's treatment there, do you pay the rest. . . . Come, it will not be for more than two months.'

'Indeed, Monsieur, as a mother I cannot but be eternally grateful for all you are doing for my son,' replied Agathe. 'But that son has cut himself off from my affection; and as for money—I have none. To avoid being a burden on this son, who works night and day, and is killing himself, who deserves all his mother's love, I am going, the day after to-morrow, into a lottery-ticket office as assistant clerk.—At my age!'

'And you, young man?' said the trooper to Joseph. 'Come, will not you do as much for your brother as a dancer at the Porte Saint-Martin and an old soldier——?'

'Look here!' said Joseph, out of patience. 'Would you like me to tell you in the plainest language what was the purpose of your visit? You came to try to fleece us.'

'Well, then, to-morrow your brother will go to the hospital.'

'He will be very well looked after,' said Joseph. 'If ever I should be in the same plight, I should go there myself!'

Giroudeau went away, much disappointed, but also

very seriously grieved at having to send a man who had been on Napoleon's staff at the battle of Montereau to the hospital of the Capucins.

Three months after this, one morning towards the end of July, Agathe, on her way to her office, crossing the Pont Neuf to save the toll of a sou on the Pont des Arts, saw a man lounging by the shops of the Quai de l'Ecole as she walked along by the river parapet. He wore the livery of the second degree of poverty, and she was startled, for she thought he resembled Philippe.

There are, in fact, three degrees of poverty in Paris. First, that of the men who keep up appearances, and who have the future before them; the poverty of young men, artists, men of the world who are down on their luck. The symptoms of this kind of want are visible only to the microscope of the most practised observer. These people constitute the knighthood of poverty; they still ride in a cab. In the second rank are old men, to whom everything is a matter of indifference, who, in the month of June, display the Cross of the Legion of Honour on an alpaca coat. This is the poverty of old annuitants, old clerks living at Sainte-Périne, careless now about their appearance. Last comes poverty in rags, the poverty of the common people, and the most poetical of all; studied by Callot and Hogarth, by Murillo, Charlet, Raffet, Gavarni, Meissonier; adored and cultivated by Art, especially at the Carnival!

The man in whom the unhappy Agathe fancied she recognised her son had, as it were, one foot on each of these two lowest steps. She saw a horribly starchless collar, a mangy hat, broken and patched boots, a threadbare overcoat with buttons that had lost their mould, while their empty gaping or twisted skins matched the torn pockets and greasy collar. Traces of flue on the cloth plainly revealed that if there were anything in those pockets, it could only be dust. Out of a pair of ripped iron-grey trousers the man drew hands as dirty as a

workman's. Over his breast a knitted woollen under-vest, tawny with long wear, of which the sleeves came below those of the coat, and the edge was pulled outside the trousers, served visibly and undoubtedly as a substitute for linen. Philippe wore a shade over his eyes of green silk stretched on wire. His head, almost bald, his colour, and hollow cheeks showed that he had just come out of that dreadful hospital.

His blue military coat, though white at the seams, still displayed his Rosette. Thus every passer-by looked at this veteran, a victim of the Government no doubt, with curiosity, mingled with pity; for the Rosette attracted the eye, and suggested honourable fears for the Legion of Honour, even in the most rabid *ultras*. At that time, though an attempt had been made to cast a slur on the Order by reckless promotions, not more than fifty-three thousand persons in France had the right to display it.

Agathe was thrilled to the marrow. Though she could not possibly love this son of hers, she still could suffer acutely through him. Touched by a last gleam of motherly feeling, she shed tears as she saw the dashing staff-officer make as though he would go into a tobacconist's to buy a cigar, and stop on the threshold; he had felt in his pockets and found nothing. Agathe hastily crossed the road, drew out her purse, pushed it into Philippe's hand, and fled as if she had committed a crime.

For two days after she could eat nothing; she constantly saw before her the horrible vision of her son dying of hunger in Paris.

'When he has spent the money in my purse, who will give him any?' thought she. 'Giroudeau was not deceiving us; Philippe has just come out of the hospital.'

She no longer saw her poor aunt's murderer, the scourge of the family, the domestic thief, the gambler, drunkard, low debauchee; what she saw was a discharged

patient dying of hunger, a smoker bereft of tobacco. At seven-and-forty she looked like a woman of seventy. Her eyes grew dim in tears and prayer.

But this was not the last blow to be dealt her by this dreadful son; her worst anticipations were to be realised. A conspiracy was discovered of officers on service, and the paragraphs of the *Moniteur* containing the details of the arrests were shouted in the streets. In the recesses of her little coop, in the lottery office in the Rue Vivienne, Agathe heard the name of Philippe Bridau. She fainted away; and the head-clerk, understanding her grief and the necessity for her taking some action, gave her a fortnight's leave of absence.

'Ah, my dear! We, with our austerity, have driven him to this,' she said to Joseph, as she went to lie down.

'I will go to see Desroches,' said Joseph.

The artist went off to place his brother's case in the hands of Desroches, who was regarded as the craftiest and astutest attorney in Paris, and who had rendered good service to various persons of importance, among others to des Lupeaulx, at that time Chief Secretary in a Minister's office. Meanwhile Giroudeau came to call on the widow, who trusted him this time.

'Madame,' said he, 'find twelve thousand francs, and your son will be released for want of evidence. We have only to purchase the silence of two witnesses.'

'I will get them,' said the poor mother, not knowing how or whence.

Inspired by the danger, she wrote to her godmother Madame Hochon to beg them of Jean-Jacques Rouget, to save Philippe. If Rouget should refuse, she entreated Madame Hochon to lend her the money, promising to repay it in two years. By return of post she received the following letter:—

'My dear Child,—Though your brother has, first and last, forty thousand francs a year, to say nothing o

the money he has saved in the last seventeen years, which Monsieur Hochon estimates at more than six hundred thousand francs, he will not spend two farthings on the nephews he has never seen. As for me—you cannot know that so long as my husband lives I shall never have six francs to call my own. Hochon is the greatest miser in Issoudun; I do not know what he does with his money; he does not give his grandchildren twenty francs in a year. To borrow it I should have to ask his leave, and he would not give it. I have not even attempted to speak with your brother, who keeps a woman, whose very humble servant he is. It is pitiable to see how the poor man is treated in his own house when he has a sister and nephews.

"I have hinted to you several times that your presence at Issoudun might save your brother, and rescue from the clutches of that hussy a fortune of forty or even sixty thousand francs a year; but you do not answer me, or seem not to have understood me. So I write to you to-day without any circumlocution. I sympathise deeply with the misfortune that has come upon you, but I can give you nothing but pity, my dearest child.

"This is why I can do nothing to help you: Hochon, at the age of eighty-five, eats his four meals a day, sups off hard-boiled eggs and salad, and is as brisk as a rabbit. I shall have lived all my days—for he will write my epitaph—without ever having had twenty francs in my purse. If you like to come to Issoudun to combat the influence of your brother's concubine, though there are good reasons why Rouget should not receive you into his house, I shall find it difficult to obtain my husband's permission to invite you to mine. Still, you can come; he will give way on that point. I know a way of getting what I want in some things, and that is by talking of my will. This seems to me so atrocious that I have never yet had recourse to it; but for you I would do the impossible. I hope your Philippe will get out of the scrape,

especially if you have a good advocate; but come to Issoudun as soon as you can. Remember that your brother, at fifty-seven, is older and more frail than Monsieur Hochon. So the case is urgent.

'Already there are rumours of a will depriving you of your inheritance; but by Monsieur Hochon's account there is yet time to procure its revocation.

'Farewell, my little Agathe. God be with you. And rely on your godmother too, for she loves you.

'MAXIMILIENNE HOCHON, née LOUSTEAU.'

'*P.S.*—Has my nephew Étienne, who writes for the papers, and is intimate, I am told, with your son Philippe, ever been to pay his respects to you?—But only come, and we will talk about him.'

This letter gave Agathe much to think about; of course she showed it to Joseph, to whom she was obliged to confide Giroudeau's suggestion. The artist, who was cautious when his brother was concerned, pointed out to his mother that she ought to lay it all before Desroches. Struck by the truth of this remark, she and her son went next day, at six in the morning, to call on Desroches in the Rue de Bussy.

The lawyer, as lean as his father before him, with a harsh voice, a coarse skin, pitiless eyes, and a face like a ferret's licking the blood of murdered chickens off its lips, sprang like a tiger when he heard of Giroudeau's call.

'Bless me, mother Bridau,' he cried in his shrill, hard voice, 'how long will you continue to be the dupe of your cursed scoundrel of a son? Do not give him a farthing. I will be responsible for Philippe; it is to save him in the future that I shall leave him to the sentence of the superior Court. You quail at the idea of his being found guilty, but God grant that his counsel may fail to get him off. You, go to Issoudun;

save your fortune and that of your children. If you do not succeed, if your brother has made his will in that woman's favour, and you cannot get him to revoke it—well, at any rate, collect the materials for proving undue influence, and I will conduct the case. But there! You are too good a woman to know how to find out the grounds for such an action. In the holidays I will go myself to Issoudun—if I possibly can.'

And this 'I will go myself' made the artist shiver in his skin.

Desroches winked at Joseph as a sign that he should let his mother go downstairs first, and detained him for an instant.

'Your brother is a base wretch; he, voluntarily or involuntarily, is the cause of the discovery of the conspiracy; for the rascal is so cunning that it is impossible to find out the truth about it. Fool or traitor—I leave you to choose between them. He will no doubt be placed under the eye of the detective police; but that is all. Be quite easy; I alone know even this much. Hurry off to Issoudun with your mother. You have all your wits; try to save the inheritance.'

'Come, poor mother, Desroches is right,' said Joseph, rejoining Agathe on the stairs. 'I have sold my pictures; let us set out for le Berry, as you have a fortnight's leave.'

Having written to her godmother to announce their arrival, Agathe and Joseph started next day for Issoudun, leaving Philippe to his fate. The diligence went down the Rue de l'Enfer to take the Orleans road. When Agathe saw the Luxembourg, whither Philippe had been transferred, she could not help saying—

'After all, but for the Allies he would not be there now!'

Many sons would have given an impatient shrug or smiled in pity; but Joseph, who was alone with her in the coupé of the diligence, threw his arm round her,

and pressed her to his heart, saying, 'Oh, mother! you are a mother as Raphael was a painter! And you always will be a dear goose of a mother!'

Aroused from her troubles by the amusement of the journey, Madame Bridau was presently obliged to think of the purpose of her visit. Of course, she re-read Madame Hochon's letter, which had so strongly excited Desroches. Struck by such words as 'concubine' and 'hussy,' traced by the pen of an old woman of seventy, as pious as she was respectable, to designate the woman who was absorbing Jean-Jacques Rouget's fortune, while he himself was spoken of as a poor creature, she began to wonder how her presence at Issoudun could avail to save her inheritance. Joseph, an artist, poor and disinterested, knew little of the law, and his mother's exclamation puzzled him.

'Before sending us off to protect our inheritance, our friend Desroches would have done well to explain to us how we can be robbed of it,' said he.

'So far as my memory serves me—but my head was full of the notion of Philippe in prison, without a pipe even perhaps, and on the eve of standing his trial before the superior court'—said Agathe, 'I fancy Desroches said we were to collect materials for an action against undue influence if it should appear that my brother has made his will in favour of this —this—woman.'

'A good joke for Desroches!' cried Joseph. 'Well, if we can make nothing of it, I will ask him to go himself.'

'Do not let us rack our brains for nothing,' said Agathe. 'When we are there, my godmother will advise us.'

This conversation, held at the moment when, after changing coach at Orleans, Madame Bridau and Joseph were entering the district of Sologne, sufficiently betrays the incapacity of both the artist and his mother to play the part the terrible attorney had assigned to them.

But on returning to Issoudun after an absence of thirty years, Agathe found the manners of the place so altered, that a slight sketch of the life of the town is indispensable. Without such a picture, it would be difficult to understand Madame Hochon's real heroism in trying to help her god-daughter, or Jean-Jacques Rouget's extraordinary position.

Though the doctor had made his son regard Agathe as a stranger, still, in a brother, there was something rather extraordinary in living for thirty years without giving his sister any sign of his existence. This silence must evidently have its cause in some unusual circumstances which any relations but Agathe and Joseph would long since have insisted on knowing. And, in fact, there was a certain connection between the state of the town and the Bridaus' concerns, which will come to light in the course of this narrative.

With all due respect to Paris, Issoudun is one of the oldest towns in France. Notwithstanding historical prejudice, which insists on regarding the Emperor Probus as the Noah of Gaul, Cæsar writes of the fine wine of Champ-Fort (de Campo Forti), one of the finest vintages of Issoudun. Rigord mentions the town in terms which allow of no doubt as to its large population and extensive commerce. Still, these two authorities would give Issoudun a moderate antiquity in comparison with its really immense age. Excavations, lately made by a learned archæologist of the town, Monsieur Armand Pérémet, have led to the discovery of a basilica of the fifth century—probably the only example in France—under the famous tower of Issoudun. This church preserves in the materials of which it is built the record of a previous civilisation; for the stones are those of a Roman temple of earlier date. And, indeed, the researches of this antiquary show that Issoudun, like all French towns of which the name, ancient or modern,

ends in dun = *dunum*, contains in its name a certificate of native origin. The syllable *dun*, attaching to every hill consecrated to the religion of the Druids, shows it to have been a Celtic military and religious centre. The Romans then may have built at the foot of the Dun of the Gauls a temple to Isis; hence, according to Chaumon, the name of the town, Is-sous-dun (Is[is]-under-hill)—Is' being an abbreviated form of Isis.

Richard Cœur de Lion undoubtedly built the famous tower, where he coined money, over a basilica of the fifth century, the third sanctuary of the third religion of this ancient city. He made use of the church as a base which he needed to add to the height of his ramparts, and preserved it by covering it with his feudal fortifications as with a cloak. Issoudun next became the seat of the transient authority of the *Routiers* and *Cottereaux*, bands of brigands with which Henry II. opposed his son Richard when he rebelled as Count of Poitou. The history of Aquitaine, not having been written by the Benedictines, will now probably never be written, as there are no more Benedictines. Hence it is well to throw every possible light on these archæological obscurities whenever an opportunity offers.

There is still further evidence of the ancient importance of Issoudun in the use made of the little Tournemine river, which has been raised for a considerable distance on an aqueduct several yards above the natural level of the Théols, the stream that encircles the town. This work is, beyond question, due to Roman engineers. Finally, the quarter lying to the north of the castle is intersected by a road known for two thousand years as the Rue de Rome; and the inhabitants of the suburb, who are certainly of a quite distinct type in race, blood, and features, call themselves the direct descendants of the Romans. They are almost all vine-dressers, and singularly stern in their manners, owing, perhaps, to their origin, and perhaps also to their

triumph over the Cottereaux and Routiers, whom they exterminated in the twelfth century in the plain of Charost.

After the outbreak in 1830, France was too much agitated to pay any attention to the rebellion among the vine-growers of Issoudun, which was very serious, though the details were never published, and for very good reasons. In the first place, the citizens of Issoudun would not allow any troops to enter the city. They chose to be responsible for it themselves, after the usage and traditions of the citizen-class in the Middle Ages. The authorities were forced to succumb to a populace supported by six or seven thousand vine-dressers, who had burnt all the archives and the tax-offices, and who went from street to street, dragging about an excise officer of the octroi, saying at each lamp-chain, 'This is the place to hang him.'—The unhappy man was delivered from these wretches by the National Guard, who saved his life by taking him to prison on the pretext of trying him. The General of the forces only got in by coming to terms with the vine-dressers, and it needed some courage to walk through the mob; for as soon as he appeared outside the Town-hall a man of the Roman suburb put his pruning scythe—a large curved knife at the end of a pole used for lopping trees—round his neck, crying out, 'No more tax-gatherers, or we yield nothing.' And the labourer would have pruned off the head of a man whom sixteen years of fighting had spared, but for the prompt intervention of one of the leaders of the rebellion, who obtained a promise that the Chambers should be asked to suppress the 'cellar-rats'—or excise men.

In the fourteenth century Issoudun could still boast of seventeen thousand inhabitants, the remnant of a population of nearly double that number in Rigord's time. Charles VII. had a residence there; it still exists, and was known as the *Maison du roy* so late as the eighteenth century. This town, at that time the central mart of

the wool-trade, supplied the greater part of Europe with the raw material, besides manufacturing it on a large scale into cloth, hats, and excellent gloves, called *Chevreautin*. In the time of Louis XIV. Issoudun, the birthplace of Baron and of Bourdaloue, was always mentioned as a home of elegance, pure French, and good society. Poupart, the priest, in his *History of Sancerre*, speaks of the inhabitants of Issoudun as remarkable among all the natives of le Berry for their acumen and mother-wit.

At the present day this brilliancy and wit have totally disappeared. Issoudun, though its wide extent bears witness to its former importance, claims but twelve thousand souls, including the vine-dressers of four extensive suburbs—Saint-Paterne, Vilatte, Rome, and les Alouettes, little towns in themselves. The inhabitants, like those of Versailles, have elbow-room in the streets. Issoudun still is the centre of the wool-trade of le Berry, a business now in danger from the improvements which are being generally introduced in the breed of sheep which the Berrichon will not adopt. The vineyards of Issoudun yield a wine which is consumed in two departments; and which, if it were only made as wine is made in Burgundy and Gascony, would be one of the best vintages in France. But, alas! 'We do as our fathers did!'—that is the law of the land. So the vine-growers leave the stalks in the liquor during fermentation, which ruins the flavour of a wine that might be the source of renewed wealth, and an opening for the industry of the district. Thanks to the roughness communicated to the wine by the wood, and which is said to diminish with age, it may be kept for a century! This reason, assigned by the vine-grower, is important enough to the science of the manufacture to be recorded here; Guillaume le Breton has, in fact, celebrated this property in a few lines in his *Philippide*.

Thus the decay of Issoudun is accounted for by its

perverse stagnation, carried to imbecility, as one single fact will show. When the direct road was contemplated from Paris to Toulouse, it was obvious that it should run from Vierzon to Châteauroux, past Issoudun. This is shorter than the line actually taken by Vatan. But the bigwigs of the town, and the Municipal Council of Issoudun—which, it is said, still sits—petitioned for its passing through Vatan; objecting that if their town lay on the high road, the price of provisions would rise, and they might be obliged to pay thirty sous for a fowl.

No analogous act is recorded of any land but the wildest districts of Sardinia, a country formerly so populous and rich, and now so deserted. When King Charles Albert, with a laudable intent to civilise the land, proposed to connect Sassari, the second town in the island, with Cagliari, by a fine and magnificent high road, the only road existing in this wild Savannah, the direct line was planned to pass Bonorva, a district inhabited by a refractory race very like our subject Arab tribes, and, in fact, descended from the Moors. When they saw themselves within an ace of being caught by civilisation, the savages of Bonorva, without taking the trouble to discuss the matter, signified their opposition to the plan. The Government disregarded this announcement. The first engineer who attempted to take a bee-line had a bullet in his brain, and died by his stake. No questions were asked; but the road made a bend that lengthens it by eight leagues.

At Issoudun the increasingly low price of the wine, all consumed on the spot, while gratifying the citizen's wish to live cheaply, is bringing about the ruin of the wine-growers, who are more and more oppressed by the cost of cultivation and the excise; in the same way, ruin threatens the wool-trade of the district, in consequence of the impossibility of improving the breed of sheep. The country folks have a rooted horror of every kind of change, even of that which may serve their interests.

A traveller from Paris found a labourer in the country who was dining off an enormous quantity of bread, cheese, and vegetables. He proved to him that by substituting a certain proportion of meat he would be nourished better and cheaper, he would do more work, and waste his capital of strength more slowly. The man of Berry admitted the accuracy of the calculation.—'But only consider the jaw, sir,' said he.—'The jaw?'—'Why, yes, sir; how people would tattle!'

'He would have been the talk of the district,' said the owner of the land on which the incident occurred. 'They would think he was as rich as a townsman. In short, he is afraid of public opinion, of being pointed at, of being supposed to be ailing or ill.—That is what we all are in this part of the world.'

Country-town folk often echo these last words with a feeling of covert pride.

And while ignorance and routine are insuperable in the country, where the peasantry are left to themselves, Issoudun, as a town, has settled into absolute social stagnation. Being obliged to make head against waning fortunes by sordid economy, each family lives for itself alone. Again, the society there is now for ever bereft of the contrast that gives distinction to manners. The town is no longer the scene of that antagonism of two classes which gave vitality to the Italian states in the Middle Ages. Issoudun has no men of birth. The Cottereaux, the Routiers, the Jacquerie, the religious wars, and the Revolution have completely exterminated the nobility. The town is very proud of this triumph. To keep down the cost of living, Issoudun has persistently refused to be made a garrison town; thus it has lost that means of intercourse with the times, besides losing the profit that is derived from the presence of the military.

Until 1756 Issoudun was one of the gayest of garrison towns. A judicial drama, which was the talk of France

at that time, deprived the town of its soldiery; the case of the Lieutenant-General of the district against the Marquis de Chapt, whose son, a dragoon officer, was put to death, justly perhaps, but traitorously, for some amorous misdemeanour.

The occupation by the 44th half-brigade, forced upon it during the civil war, was not such as to reconcile the inhabitants to the soldier tribe.

Bourges, of which the population is annually diminishing, is a victim to the same social atrophy. Vitality is failing in these large bodies. The State is no doubt to blame. It is the duty of a Government to detect such sores in the body politic, and to remedy them by sending men of energy to the affected spots to change the state of things. Alas! far from this, such fatal and funereal peacefulness is a source of satisfaction! Besides, how is it possible to send fresh chiefs or capable judges? Who nowadays would care to be buried in a district where he can earn no credit for the good to be done? If by chance an ambitious outsider is appointed to such a place, he is soon swamped by the power of inertia, and tunes himself to the pitch of the dreadful provincial life. Issoudun would have benumbed Napoleon.

As a result of this state of things, the district of Issoudun, in 1822, was under the administration of men all natives of le Berry. Government authority was therefore *nil* or impotent, excepting in those cases, of course very rare, of which the evident importance demands the intervention of the law. Monsieur Mouilleron, the public prosecutor, was related to every body, and his deputy belonged to a family in the town. The President of the Criminal Court, before he had risen to such dignity, had made himself famous by one of those speeches which, in the provinces, crown a man with a fool's cap for the rest of his life. At the end of a case for the prosecution which would entail capital punish-

ment, he said to the prisoner: 'My poor Pierre, the case is clear; you will have your head cut off. Let that be a lesson to you.' The superintendent of police, who had held the post ever since the Restoration, had relations all over the district.

Finally, not only had religion no influence whatever, but the curé was not respected. The townsfolk—Liberals, back-biters, and ignorant—repeated more or less absurd stories about the poor man's conduct to his housekeeper. The children went to his catechising all the same, and were admitted to their first Communion; all the same, there was a school; Mass was said and festivals were kept; the taxes were paid, the only thing Paris requires of the provinces; and the Maire passed resolutions; but all these acts of social life were mere matters of routine. Thus the flabbiness of official life was in admirable harmony with the moral and intellectual condition of the place. The sequel of this narrative will show the results of a state of things less exceptional than might be supposed. Many towns in France, especially in the south, are very like Issoudun. And the state to which the triumph of the middle class had brought this town—the chief town of its district (or *arrondissement*)—awaits all France, and even Paris, if the citizen class continues to be master of the home and foreign policy of our country.

Now a word as to the topography of Issoudun. The town extends north and south on a hillside that curves towards the Châteauroux road. At the foot of the slope a canal was constructed at the time when the place was prosperous, to supply the factories, or to flood the trenches below the ramparts; it is known as *la Rivière forcée*, the Borrowed Stream, its waters being diverted from the Théols. The borrowed stream forms an artificial branch, returning to the natural river below the Roman suburb at a point where it is met by the Tournemine and some other affluents. These little brooks of rushing

water irrigate meadows of some extent, which lie on all sides below the yellow or white hills closely dotted with black specks, for such is the aspect of the vine-land of Issoudun during seven months of the year. The vine-dressers layer the vines every year, and leave nothing but a hideous stump, without any prop, at the bottom of a funnel of earth. Thus, on arriving from Vierzon, Vatan, or Châteauroux, the eye, wearied by the monotonous plain, is agreeably surprised by the appearance of the meadowland of Issoudun, the oasis of this part of the country, supplying vegetables for ten leagues round. Below the suburb of Rome stretches one vast market-garden exclusively devoted to kitchen produce, and divided into the Upper and Lower Baltan.

A broad, long avenue, with side-walks planted with poplars, leads from the town, across the fields, to an ancient convent called Frapesle, where an English garden—unique in the district—bears the high-sounding name of Tivoli. Here, on Sundays, fond couples wander to breathe their confidences.

Traces of the former splendour of Issoudun can, of course, be discerned by an attentive observer, and the most conspicuous are the divisions of the town. The castle, which of old was a town of itself, with its walls and moats, constitutes a distinct quarter even now, entered only through the old gates, or quitted by three bridges over the arms of the two rivers ; this alone has the aspect of an old town. The walls still show their formidable masonry, here and there crowned with houses. Above the castle rises the tower which was the citadel. The conqueror of the town lying round these two fortified strongholds had still to take both the tower and the castle. Nor did the mastery of the castle secure that of the tower. The suburb of Saint-Paterne beyond the tower, shaped like a palette, and encroaching on the fields, is so large that it must in early ages have been the original township. Since the Middle Ages Issoudun,

like Paris, has climbed the hill and spread outside the tower and the castle.

In 1822 this notion still derived some certainty from the existence of the beautiful Church of Saint-Paterne, only recently pulled down by the son of the man who purchased it from the nation. This building, one of the prettiest examples of Romanesque Church architecture in France, was destroyed without any one having drawn the porch front, which was in perfect preservation. The only voice that was raised to save the building found no echo, neither in the town nor in the department.

Though the castle-precincts of Issoudun have all the character of an old place, with its narrow streets and ancient houses, the town, properly so called, which was taken and burnt again and again at different periods, and especially during the Fronde, when it was burnt to the ground, has now a modern aspect. Broad streets, as compared with the other quarters, and well-built houses form a contrast with the ancient castle, striking enough to have earned Issoudun, in some geographies, the epithet of *pretty*.

In a town thus constituted, devoid even of commercial activity, of taste for the arts, of scientific interest, where every one sits at home, it could not but happen—and it did in fact happen—that at the time of the Restoration, in 1816, when the war was over, many of the young men of the place had no career before them, and did not know what to do with themselves pending their marriage, or their coming into their parents' money. Bored to death at home, these young people found no means of diversion in the town; and since, as the proverb has it, young men must sow their wild oats, they performed the operation at the expense of the town itself. It was difficult to do much by broad daylight; they would have been recognised, and, the cup of their misdemeanours once full, they would at their first serious offence have found themselves in the hands of the police; so they very

judiciously preferred to play their mischievous pranks at night. And thus, among these old ruins left by so many departed phases of civilisation, a vestige of the farcical spirit that characterised the manners of the past flashed like a dying flame. These young men took their pleasure as Charles IX. and his courtiers, or Henry V. and his companions, were wont to take theirs, in a form of amusement common of old in many provincial towns.

Having become confederates by their need of mutual help and defence, and the desire to invent practical jokes, the friction of wits developed among them a pitch of mischievousness which is natural to the young, and may be noticed even in animals. Their confederacy gave them also the little enjoyment that comes of the mystery of a standing conspiracy. They called themselves 'The Knights of Idlesse.' All through the day these young monkeys were little saints; they affected excessive quietude; besides, they slept late in the mornings after nights when they had carried out some cruel trick. The Knights of Idlesse began by common practical jokes, such as unhooking and changing shop-signs, ringing at doors, hurling a cask left outside a door into a neighbour's cellar with a prodigious clatter, and waking the folks by a noise like the explosion of a mine. At Issoudun, as in many places, the way into the cellars is through a trap-door close to the entrance from the street, closed by a huge lid with hinges, and fastened with a heavy padlock. These Bad Boys, at the end of 1816, had not got beyond the practical jokes played everywhere by young men and lads. But in January 1817 the Order of Idlesse had a Grand Master, and distinguished itself by certain pranks which until 1823 were the terror of Issoudun, or, at any rate, kept the citizens and craftsmen in perpetual alarms.

This leader was one Maxence Gilet, called Max for short; and his antecedents, no less than his strength and youth, destined him for the part. Maxence Gilet was

supposed to be the natural son of Lousteau, Madame Hochon's brother, the sub-delegate whose gallantries had left many memorials, and who had incurred, as we know, Doctor Rouget's hatred *à propos* to Agathe's birth. But before this quarrel the friendship between the two men had been so close that, to use a phrase of the country and period, where one went the other would go. So it was always said that Max might just as well be the doctor's son as Lousteau's; but he belonged to neither of them, for his father was a handsome young dragoon officer in garrison at Bourges. However, as a consequence of their intimacy, happily for the boy, the two men were always disputing for the paternity.

Max's mother, the wife of a clog-maker in the Roman suburb, was for her soul's destruction amazingly beautiful, with the beauty of a true Trasteverina, the only thing she had to bequeath to her boy. Madame Gilet, before Max's birth in 1788, had long pined for this boon from heaven, which was maliciously ascribed to the gallantries of the two men—no doubt to set them at loggerheads. Gilet, a hardened old sot, winked at his wife's misconduct by such collusion and tolerance as are not exceptional in the lowest class. The woman herself, hoping to secure their protection for the child, took good care not to enlighten the supposed fathers. In Paris she would have been a millionaire; at Issoudun she sometimes was well off, sometimes wretchedly poor, and at last scorned by all.

Madame Hochon, Monsieur Lousteau's sister, paid about ten crowns a year towards Max's schooling. This liberality, which Madame Hochon could not allow herself in consequence of her husband's avarice, was naturally attributed to her brother, then living at Sancerre. When Doctor Rouget, whose son was not a success, observed how handsome Max was, he paid the school expenses of the 'young rascal,' as he called him, till 1805. As

Lousteau had died in 1800, and the doctor seemed to gratify a feeling of pride by paying the boy's schooling for five years, the question of paternity remained unsettled.

Indeed, Maxence Gilet, the cause of many jests, was soon forgotten. And this is his story. In 1806, a year after Doctor Rouget's death, the boy, who seemed born to a life of adventure, and who was indeed gifted with extraordinary strength and agility, had committed a number of more or less rash acts of mischief. He and Monsieur Hochon's grandsons were already in league to drive the tradesfolks to frenzy; he gathered all the neighbours' fruit before the owners, making nothing of scaling a wall. This imp had no match in athletic exercises; he played prisoner's base to perfection; he could have coursed and caught a hare. He had an eye worthy of Leather-Stocking, and had a passion for sport. Instead of doing his lessons, he passed all his time in shooting at a mark. He spent all the money he could extract from the old doctor in buying powder and shot for a worn-out pistol given to him by Gilet the clog-maker. Now, in the autumn of 1806, Max, by this time seventeen, committed an involuntary murder one evening at nightfall by coming upon a young woman in her garden, where he was stealing fruit, and frightening her into a miscarriage. Being threatened by the clog-maker with the guillotine—the old man no doubt wanted to be rid of him—Max ran off, and never stopped till he reached Bourges, joined a regiment on the march to Spain, and there enlisted. No further notice was taken of the young woman's death.

A lad of Max's disposition was certain to distinguish himself; and he did so, with such effect that, after three campaigns, he returned as a captain, for the little learning he had picked up had served him well. In 1809, in Portugal, he was left for dead on an English battery which his company had taken, but could not hold. Max,

a prisoner, was sent by the English to the Spanish hulks at Cabrera, the worst of all.

An application was indeed made on his behalf to the Emperor for the Cross of the Legion of Honour and the rank of Major, but Napoleon was just then in Austria; he kept all his favours for the dashing actions that were done under his own eye; he had no liking for men who were taken prisoners, and was not best pleased with the state of affairs in Portugal.

Max was left on the hulks from 1810 to 1814. In the course of those four years he was utterly demoralised; for the hulks were the galleys *minus* the crime and disgrace. In the first place, to secure his own freedom of action and defend himself against the corruption that was rampant in those foul prisons, unworthy of any civilised nation, the handsome young captain killed in duels—for duels were fought on a space six yards square—seven bullies and tyrants of whom he rid his ship, to the great joy of their victims. Max reigned in the hulk, thanks to the prodigious skill he acquired in handling his weapons, to his personal strength and cleverness. But he, in his turn, committed some arbitrary acts, and had adherents who took his part and became his flatterers. In this school of misery, where embittered nature dreamed only of revenge, and where the sophistries hatched in these seething brains found a warrant for every evil purpose, Max became utterly depraved. He listened to the counsel of those who aimed at fortune at any price, and did not shrink from criminal deeds so long as they could be committed without proof.

At last, at the peace, he was released, perverted though guiltless, capable of becoming a great politician in public life, or a scoundrel in private life, as circumstances might direct.

On his return to Issoudun he heard of the deplorable end of his parents. Like all people who give way to their passions, and lead, as the saying goes, a short life

and a merry one, the Gilets had died in hospital in the most dire poverty. Almost immediately after the news of Napoleon's landing at Cannes ran through France, Max thought he could not do better than go to Paris and ask for his Cross and his promotion. The Marshal who was then at the head of the War Office remembered Captain Gilet's brave conduct in Portugal; he gave him his commission with the rank of Major of Infantry; but he could not obtain the Cross for him. 'The Emperor says you will be sure to win it in the first fight,' said the Marshal. And, in fact, the Emperor put down the brave Captain's name for that honour after the battle of Fleurus, where Gilet distinguished himself. After the battle of Waterloo, Gilet retired with the army on the Loire. When the revision took place, Marshal Feltre would grant him neither his promotion nor his Cross.

Napoleon's soldier came home to Issoudun in a state of exasperation that may be easily imagined; he refused to serve at all without his Cross and the rank of Major. The authorities thought this a monstrous demand from a young man of five-and-twenty, who at that rate might be a Colonel at thirty. So Max sent in his papers. Thus the Major—for the Bonapartists recognised among themselves the promotions conferred in 1815—lost the pittance designated as half-pay that was doled out to the officers of the army of the Loire. At the sight of this handsome young fellow, whose whole possessions were twenty napoleons, Issoudun bestirred itself in his favour, and the Maire gave him a place in his office with a salary of six hundred francs. Max, after holding this appointment for about six months, retired of his own accord, and was succeeded by a captain named Carpentier, who, like himself, had remained faithful to Napoleon.

Gilet, already Grand Master of the Knights of Idlesse, had entered on a life which lost him the regard of the

best families in the town; not that they said anything to him, for he was violent, and dreaded by everybody, even by those officers of the old army who had, like him, refused to serve, and had come home to plant cabbages in le Berry.

The small affection felt for the Bourbons by the good folks of Issoudun is not surprising after what has here been said. And, in proportion to its size, there were more Bonapartists in this little town than anywhere else. As is well known, almost all the Bonapartists became Liberals. At Issoudun, or in the neighbourhood, there were perhaps a dozen officers in the same position as Maxence, who liked him so well as to regard him as their chief; with the sole exception of Carpentier, his successor, and of a certain Monsieur Mignonnet, ex-captain of the Artillery of the Guard. Carpentier, a cavalry officer, who had risen from the ranks, very soon married, thus allying himself with one of the most important families in the town—that of Borniche-Hérau. Mignonnet, a student of the Ecole Polytechnique, had belonged to a corps which fancies itself superior to all others. There were in the Imperial armies two tones of feeling among the military. A strong party had an immense contempt for the mere citizen, the *péquin*, the plain-clothes-man, such as the noble felt for the villein, the conquering race for the conquered. These were not over-strict in observing the code of honour in their intercourse with civilians, and a man who had cut down a bourgeois was not too severely blamed. The others, and among them the artillery, as a result perhaps of its republicanism, did not adopt this view, which tended indeed to divide France into two parts—Military France and Civilian France. Hence, though Major Potel and Captain Renard, two officers living in the Roman quarter, whose views as to civilians never varied, were Maxence Gilet's friends through thick and thin, Major Mignonnet and Captain Carpentier sided with the towns-

folks in regarding Max's conduct as unworthy of an 'officer and a gentleman.'

Major Mignonnet, a little dry man of much dignity, gave his mind to the problems which the steam-engine seemed likely to solve, and lived very simply in the quiet society of Monsieur and Madame Carpentier. His gentle manners and scientific pursuits gained him the consideration of the whole town. And it was currently said that these two gentleman were *a very different sort* from Major Potel and Captain Renard, Maxence, and the rest who frequented the Café Militaire and kept up the rough manners and traditions of the Empire.

Thus, at the time when Madame Bridau revisited Issoudun, Max was an outlaw from the citizen world. The young fellow indeed so far sentenced himself that he never intruded himself on the circle known as the club, and did not complain of the reprobation of which he was the object, though he was the youngest, and smartest, and best-dressed man in Issoudun, spent a good deal of money, and even had a horse—a creature as strange at Issoudun as Lord Byron's was at Venice.

It will presently be seen how it had come to pass that Maxence, poor and unholpen, had been enabled to become the man of fashion of Issoudun; for these disgraceful means, which earned him the contempt of timid or pious persons, were linked with the interests which had brought Agathe and Joseph from Paris. To judge from his braggart bearing and the expression of his countenance, Max cared little enough for public opinion; he no doubt counted on being revenged some day, and reigning over those who now scorned him.

Besides, though the better class might misprize him, the admiration his character commanded among the populace was a counterpoise to that opinion; his courage, his fine appearance, his decisiveness, delighted the mob; but, indeed, his depravity was not known to them, nor was its extent suspected even by the townsfolk.

Max, at Issoudun, played a part very similar to that of the Armourer in *The Fair Maid of Perth*; he was the champion of Bonaparte and the Opposition. He was looked to on great occasions as the good men of Perth looked to Smith. A fray gave the hero and the victim of the hundred days his opportunity.

In 1819 a battalion commanded by some Royalist officers, lads just out of Maison Rouge, marched through Issoudun on their way to relieve the garrison at Bourges. Not knowing what to do in such a constitutional town, the officers went to pass the time at the Café Militaire. There is such a resort for soldiers in every provincial town. That of Issoudun, standing in a corner of the parade-ground under the walls, and kept by the widow of an officer, naturally served as a sort of club for the Bonapartists of the place, half-pay officers and others who were of Max's way of thinking, and who were allowed, by the feeling of the town, to display their adoration of the Emperor. After 1816 a banquet was held at Issoudun every year to celebrate the anniversary of Napoleon's coronation.

The first three Royalists who dropped in asked for newspapers, naming, among others, the *Quotidienne* and the *Drapeau blanc*. But the opinions of the town, and especially of the Café Militaire, did not encourage Royalist newspapers. The Café could only produce the *Commerce*, the name assumed for a few years by the *Constitutionnel* when that paper was suppressed by law. But since, in the first number published under that title, its leader opened with these words, 'The *Commerce* is essentially constitutional in its views,' it was still familiarly called the *Constitutionnel*. Every subscriber at once saw the joke which bid them pay no attention to the name over the door; the wine would be of the old tap.

The stout mistress perched at her desk told the Royalists that she had not the papers they asked for.

'What papers do you take then?' said one of the officers, a captain.

The waiter, a small youth in a blue cloth jacket and a coarse linen apron, produced the *Commerce*.

'Oh! so that is your paper! Have you no other?'

'No,' said the waiter, 'that is the only one.'

The Captain tore the hostile sheet into fragments, threw it on the floor, and spat upon it, saying, 'Bring the dominoes!'

Within ten minutes news of the insult offered to the Constitutional Opposition and Liberalism generally in the person of the sacrosanct paper, which waged war on the priesthood with the courage and wit we all know, was flying along the streets and flashing like light into every house; every one was telling the tale. The same sentence rose to every lip: 'Run and tell Max!'

Max was soon informed. The officers had not finished their game of dominoes when Max, accompanied by Major Potel and Captain Renard, entered the Café; while a following of thirty young fellows, eager to see the end of the matter, remained, for the most part, outside in groups on the Parade. The Café soon was full.

'Waiter, bring me my paper,' said Max very quietly. Then a little comedy was played. The stout woman said in a timid and conciliatory tone—

'I have lent it, Captain.'

'Go and fetch it!' cried one of Max's companions.

'Cannot you do without the paper?' said the waiter. 'We have not got it.'

The young officers were laughing and stealing side-glances at the town party.

'It is torn up!' exclaimed a young Bonapartist, looking at the Captain's feet.

'Who has dared to tear up the newspaper?' asked Max in a voice of thunder, his eyes flashing, and his arms crossed as he rose.

'And we have spit upon it too,' replied the three Royalists, rising and facing Max.

'You have insulted the whole town!' said Max, turning pale.

'Well, what of that?' said the youngest of the three.

With a neatness, a boldness, and a swiftness which the young men could not guard against, Max dealt two slaps to the foremost man as they stood, saying—

'Do you understand French?'

They went out to fight in the Allée de Frapesle, three against three. Potel and Renard would not hear of allowing Max to fight it out alone with the Royalists. Max killed his man; Potel wounded his so severely that the unhappy lad, a man of good birth, died next day in the hospital, whither they carried him. As for the third, he got off with a sword-cut, and wounded Captain Renard, his opponent. The battalion went on to Bourges that night. This affair, much talked about in the country, crowned Maxence Gilet as a hero.

The Knights of Idlesse, all young—the eldest was not five-and-twenty—admired Maxence. Some of them, far from sharing the rigid prudery of their families with regard to Max, envied him greatly, and thought him a very fortunate man. Under such a leader the Order did wonders. From the month of January 1817 not a week passed but the town was in a pother over some fresh prank. Max, as a point of honour, imposed certain conditions on the Knights; by-laws were drawn up. These young devils became as prompt as disciples of Amoros, as tough as kites, skilled in every kind of exercise, as strong and as dexterous as malefactors. They were adepts in the business of creeping over roofs, scaling house-walls, jumping and walking without a sound, spreading mortar, and building up doors. They had an arsenal of ladders, ropes, tools, and disguises. The Knights of Idlesse, in short, achieved the very ideal of

ingenious mischief, not only in the execution, but in the invention of the tricks they played. They were at last inspired by that genius of malignity in which Panurge took such delight, which provokes every one to laugh, and makes the victim so ridiculous that he dare not complain. The men, all respectably connected, had, of course, means of information in private houses which enabled them to obtain such intelligence as could serve them in the perpetration of their rascality.

One very cold night these demons incarnate carried a large stove out into the courtyard of a house, and stoked it so effectually that the fire lasted till morning. Then it was rumoured in the town that Monsieur So-and-so (a noted miser!) had been trying to warm his yard.

Sometimes they lay in ambush in the High Street, or the Rue Basse, the two arteries, as it were, of the town, into which run a great number of smaller cross streets. Squatting, each at the corner of a side street, under the wall, putting their heads out when every household was in its first sleep, they would shout in a tone of terror from one end of the town to the other—

'What is the matter? Oh, what is the matter?' The repeated question would rouse the citizens, who soon appeared in their shirts and night-caps, candle in hand, catechising each other, and holding the strangest colloquies with the most bewildered faces ever seen.

There was a poor bookbinder, very old, who believed in demons. Like most provincial artisans, he worked in a little low shop. The Knights, disguised as devils, invaded his shop at night, put him into his wastepaper box, and left him shrieking like three men at the stake. The poor man roused all the neighbours, to whom he related these apparitions of Lucifer, and the neighbours could never undeceive him. The binder very nearly went mad.

In the depth of a severe winter the confederates

demolished the chimney-pot of the tax-collector, and replaced it in the course of the night; it was exactly the same; they made no noise, and left not the slightest trace of their work. The chimney was, however, so arranged inside as to fill the room with smoke. The tax-collector endured this for two months before discovering why his chimney, which had always worked properly and given him perfect satisfaction, should play such tricks; and he had to reconstruct it.

One day they stuffed trusses of straw sprinkled with sulphur, and greasy paper into the chimney of an old bigot, a friend of Madame Hochon's. Next morning, on lighting her fire, the poor old lady, a quiet, gentle creature, thought she had lighted a volcano. The firemen came, the whole town rushed in; and as there were among the firemen some of the Knights of Idlesse, they deluged the poor soul's house, and put her in fear of drowning after the fear of fire. She fell ill of the shock.

When they wished to keep any one up all night, under arms and in mortal terror, they sent anonymous letters warning him of a plan to rob him; then they crept one by one under his wall or past his windows whistling signals to each other.

One of their most successful hoaxes, which amused the town hugely, and is talked of to this day, was sending to all the possible heirs of a very miserly old woman, who was expected to leave a large fortune, a few lines announcing her death, and inviting them to come punctually at a certain hour, when seals would be affixed. About eighty persons arrived from Vatan, Saint-Florent, Vierzon, and the neighbourhood, all in deep mourning, but in very good spirits—men with their wives, widows with their sons, children with their parents, some in gigs, some in basket-carriages, some in old tax-carts. Imagine the scenes between the old lady's servant and the first-comers! Then the consultations at the lawyers! —It was like a riot in the town.

At last one day the Sous-préfet began to think this state of things intolerable, all the more so because it was impossible to ascertain who ventured to perpetrate these pleasantries. Suspicion, indeed, rested on the guilty youths; but as the National Guard was at that time a mere name at Issoudun, as there was no garrison, and as the lieutenant of police had not more than eight gendarmes at his command, and kept no patrol, it was impossible to obtain proofs. The Sous-préfet was at once placed on 'the order of the night,' to be treated as obnoxious. This functionary was in the habit of eating two new-laid eggs for breakfast. He kept fowls in his yard, and he crowned his mania for eating new-laid eggs by insisting on cooking them himself. Neither his wife, nor the maid, nor any one, according to him, could cook an egg as it ought to be done; he watched the clock, and boasted that in this particular he could beat all the world. For two years he had boiled his own eggs with a success that was the subject of much jesting. Then, every night for a month the eggs were taken from his hens and hard-boiled eggs put in their place. The poor man was at his wits' end, and lost his reputation as the egg-boiling Sous-préfet. Finally, he had something else for breakfast.

Still, he never suspected the Knights of Idlesse; the trick was too neatly done. Max hit on a plan for greasing his stove-pipes every night with oil saturated with such vile odours that it was impossible to live in the house. Nor was this all; one morning his wife, wishing to attend mass, found her shawl stuck together inside by some glue so tenacious that she was obliged to go without it. The official begged to be transferred. His cowardice and submission established beyond question the occult and farcical sway of the Knights of Idlesse.

Between the Rue des Minimes and the Place Misère there existed at that time a part of the town enclosed between the Borrowed Stream at the bottom and the

rampart above — the part extending from the Parade to the crockery market. This sort of misshapen square was occupied by wretched-looking houses, closely packed and divided by alleys so narrow that two persons could not walk abreast. This part of the town, a sort of Court of Miracles, was inhabited by poor people, or such as carried on the least profitable trades, lodging in the hovels and wretched tenements expressively designated as *maison borgnes*—purblind houses. It was, no doubt, at all times a spot accursed, the den of evil livers, for one of these lanes is called Rue du Bourreau, or Hangman's Alley. It is certain that the town executioner had here his house, with its red door, for more than five centuries. The executioner's man lives there still, if public report may be believed, for the townspeople never see him. None but the vine-dressers keep up any communication with this mysterious personage, who inherits from his predecessors the gift of healing fractures and wounds. The women of the town held high festival here of old, when the place gave itself the airs of a capital. Here dwelt the dealers in second-hand articles, which never seem to find a buyer, old-clothes vendors, with their malodorous display; in short, all the mongrel population that herds in some such corner of almost every town, under the dominion of one or two Jews.

At the corner of one of these dark passages, in the least dead-alive part of the suburb, there was, from 1815 till 1823, and perhaps even later, a beer-shop kept by a woman known as Mother Cognette. The beer-shop occupied a house not ill built of courses of white stone filled in with rubble and mortar, and consisting of one story and an attic. Over the door shone an immense branch of a fir-tree gleaming like Florentine bronze. As if this 'bush' were not sufficiently explicit, the eye was caught by a blue board, fastened to the architrave, on which the words 'Good March beer' were legible above

a picture representing a soldier offering to a very lightly draped woman a jet of foam spouting from a jug into the glass she holds, and forming a curve like the arch of a bridge, the whole so gorgeously coloured as to make Delacroix faint.

The ground-floor consisted of a large front room, serving both as kitchen and dining-room; the provisions needed for carrying on the business hung to hooks from the rafters. Behind this room a ladder-stair went up to the first floor; but, at the foot of the stairs, was a door opening into a small narrow room, lighted from one of those provincial back-yards which are more like a chimney, so narrow, dark, and high are they. This little room, screened by a lean-to, and hidden from all eyes by the surrounding walls, was the hall where the Bad Boys of Issoudun held their full court. Old Cognet ostensibly entertained the country people there on market days; in reality, he played host to the Knights of Idlesse.

This old Cognet, formerly a groom in some rich house, had married la Cognette, originally a cook in a good family. The suburb of Rome still uses a feminine form of the husband's name for the wife, in the Latin fashion, as in Italy and Poland. By combining their savings, Cognet and his wife had been able to buy this house and set up as tavern-keepers. La Cognette, a woman of about forty, tall and buxom, with a turn-up nose, an olive skin, hair as black as jet, brown eyes, round and bright, and an intelligent, merry face, had been chosen by Maxence Gilet to be the Léonarde of the Order for the sake of her good-humour and her talents as a cook. Cognet himself was about fifty-six, thick-set, submissive to his wife, and, to quote the joke she constantly repeated, he could not help seeing straight, for he was blind of one eye.

For seven years, from 1816 to 1823, neither husband nor wife ever let out a word as to what was done or plotted every night on their premises, and they were

always very much attached to all the Knights. Their devotion was indeed perfect, but it may seem less admirable when we consider that their interest was a guarantee for their silence and affection. At whatever hour of the night the members of the Order came to la Cognette's, if they knocked in a particular way, Father Cognet, recognising the signal, rose, lighted the fire and the candles, opened the door, and went to the cellar for wine laid in expressly for the Order, while his wife cooked them a first-rate supper, either before or after the exploits planned the night before, or during the day.

While Madame Bridau was on her way from Orleans to Issoudun, the Knights of Idlesse were preparing one of their most famous tricks. An old Spaniard, a prisoner of war, who, at the peace, had remained in France, where he carried on a small trade in seeds, had come to market early, and had left his empty cart at the foot of the tower. Maxence was the first to arrive at the meeting-place fixed for the evening under the tower, and was presently asked in a low voice, 'What is doing to-night?'

'Old Fario's cart is out there,' replied he. 'I almost broke my nose against it. Let us get it up the knoll to the foot of the tower, and after that we will see.'

When Richard built the tower of Issoudun, he founded it, as has been said, on the remains of a basilica which occupied the site of the Roman temple and the Celtic Dun. These ruins, each representing a long series of centuries, formed a large mound, full of the monuments of three ages. Thus Richard Cœur de Lion's tower stands on the top of a cone sloping equally steeply on all sides, and to be ascended only by zigzag paths. To represent its position in a few words, the tower may be compared to the Obelisk of Luxor on its base. The base of the tower of Issoudun, concealing so many archæological treasures as yet unknown, is above eighty feet high on

the side next the town. In an hour the cart had been taken to pieces and hoisted bit by bit to the top of the hill at the foot of the tower, by means something like that of the soldiers who carried the guns up the pass of Saint-Bernard. The cart was put together again, and all traces of the operations so carefully effaced that it would seem to have been carried there by the devil, or by a stroke of a fairy's wand. After this great achievement, the Knights, being hungry and thirsty, made their way to la Cognette's, and were soon seated round the table in the low narrow room, laughing by anticipation at the face Fario would make when, at about ten o'clock in the morning, he should go to look for his cart.

The Knights, of course, did not play these antics every night. The talents of Sganarelle, Mascarille, and Scapin rolled into one would not have been able to invent three hundred and sixty-five practical jokes a year. In the first place, circumstances were not always favourable: the moon was too bright, or their last prank had been too annoying to sober folks; or one or another would refuse his co-operation when some relation was the chosen victim. But, though the rascals did not meet every night at la Cognette's, they saw each other every day, and were companions in such lawful pleasures as hunting or the vintage in autumn, and skating in winter.

Among this group of a score of youths who thus protested against the social somnolence of the town, some were more especially intimate with Max than the others, or made him their idol. A man of this temper often infatuates those younger than himself. Now Madame Hochon's two grandsons, François Hochon and Baruch Borniche, were his devotees. The two boys regarded Max as almost a cousin, accepting the views of the neighbours as to his left-handed relationship to the Lousteaus. Max was free with his loans of money denied them by their grandfather Hochon for their

amusements; he took them out shooting, and gave them some training; in fact, his influence over them was paramount to that of home. They both were orphans, and though of age, lived under the guardianship of their grandfather, in consequence of certain circumstances to be explained when the great Monsieur Hochon appears on the scene.

At this moment François and Baruch—we will call them by their Christian names to make the story clearer—were seated, one on the right hand, and one on the left of Max, at the middle of the supper-table, that was wretchedly lighted by the fuliginous glimmer of four dips, eight to the pound. The party, consisting of not more than eleven of the Knights, had drunk a dozen to fifteen bottles of various wines. Baruch, whose name suggests a survival of Calvinism at Issoudun, said to Max at the moment when the wine had set all tongues wagging—

'You are about to be threatened at the very centre——'

'What do you mean by that?' asked Max.

'Why, my grandmother has had a letter from Madame Bridau, her god-daughter, announcing her arrival on a visit with her son. My grandmother arranged two rooms yesterday for their reception.'

'And what is that to me?' said Max, taking up his glass, emptying it at a gulp, and setting it down on the table with a comical flourish.

Max was now four-and-thirty. One of the candles stood near him, and cast its light on his martial countenance, illuminating his forehead, and showing off his fair complexion, his flashing eyes, and his hair crisply waved, and as black as jet. This hair stood up strongly and naturally, curling back from his brow and temples, and clearly marking the outline of growth which our grandfathers called the five points. Notwithstanding such a striking contrast of black and white, Max had a very

sweet face, deriving its charm from its shape, much like that given by Raphael to his Virgins' faces, and from a finely-shaped mouth, on which a gentle smile was apt to linger, a set expression which Max had gradually adopted. The fine colour that flushes the faces of the Berrichons added to his genial look, and when he laughed outright he displayed two-and-thirty teeth worthy to grace the mouth of a fine lady. He was tall and well proportioned, neither stout nor thin. His hands, kept with care, were white and not unshapely, but his feet were those of the Roman suburb, of a foot soldier under the Empire. He would have made a fine general of division; he had shoulders that would have been the fortune of a field-marshal, and a breast broad enough to display all the Orders of Europe. Intelligence gave purpose to all his movements. And then, attractive by nature, like almost all children of a passion, the noble blood of his real father came out in him.

'But do not you know, Max,' cried a youth at the bottom of the table, the son of a retired surgeon-major named Goddet, the best doctor in the town, 'that Madame Hochon's god-daughter is Rouget's sister? And if she and her son the painter are coming here, it is no doubt to get back her share of the old man's fortune, and then good-bye to your harvest!'

Max frowned. Then with a glance that went from face to face all round the table, he studied the effect on his companions of this address, and again he said, 'What is that to me?'

'But,' François began again, 'it seems to me that if old Rouget were to alter his will, supposing he has made one in favour of la Rabouilleuse . . .'

Here Max cut his faithful follower short with these words—

'When, on my arrival here, I heard you mentioned as one of the cinq-Hochons (cinq-cochons = five pigs), as the pun on your name has it—and has had it these thirty

years—I told the man who called you so to shut up, my dear François, and that so emphatically, that no one at Issoudun has ever repeated that idiotic jest, at any rate not in my presence! And this is the return you make: you make use of a name of contempt in speaking of a woman you know me to be attached to.'

Never had Max said so much as to his intimacy with the woman of whom François had just spoken by the nickname commonly given to her in Issoudun. As a former prisoner on the hulks, Max had enough experience, and as Major in the Grenadier Guards he had learnt enough of honour, to understand the origin of the contempt for him in the town. He had never allowed any one whatever to say a word to him with reference to Mademoiselle Flore Brazier, Jean-Jacques Rouget's servant-mistress, so vigorously designated by good Madame Hochon as a hussy. Moreover, Max was well known to be too touchy to be spoken to on the subject unless he began it, and he never had begun it. In short, it was too dangerous to incur Max's anger or displeasure for even his most intimate friends to banter him about la Rabouilleuse.

When something was once said of a connection between Max and this girl in the presence of Major Potel and of Captain Renard, the two officers with whom he lived on terms of equality, Potel had replied—

'If he is Jean-Jacques Rouget's half-brother, why should he not live with him?'

'And besides,' added Renard, 'the girl is a morsel for a king; supposing he loves her, where is the harm? Does not young Goddet pay court to Madame Fichet to make the daughter his wife as a reward for such a penance?'

After this well-merited lecture, François could not recover the thread of his ideas, and he was yet more at fault when Max gently added—

'Well, go on——'

'Certainly not!' cried François.

'You are angry for nothing, Max,' said young Goddet. 'Is it not an understood thing that here, at la Cognette's, we may all say what we please? Should we not all become the mortal foes of any one of us who remembered outside these walls anything that is said, thought, or done here? All the town speaks of Flore Brazier by the nickname of la Rabouilleuse; if François let it slip out by accident, is that a crime against the Order of Idlesse?'

'No,' said Max, 'only against our personal friendship. —But I thought better of it; I remembered we were in Idlesse. I told him to go on.'

There was utter silence. The pause was so uncomfortable for all present that Max exclaimed: 'I will go on for him' (sensation), 'for all of you' (amazement), 'and tell you what you are thinking' (great sensation). 'You think that Flore, la Rabouilleuse, Flore Brazier, Daddy Rouget's housekeeper—for they call him *Père* Rouget!—an old bachelor, who will never have any children!—you think, I say, that this woman has supplied me with everything since I came to Issoudun. If I have three hundred francs a month to toss out of window; if I can treat you often as I am doing this evening, and have money to lend to you all, I must get the cash out of Madame Brazier's purse? Well, then, by Heaven! Yes, and again yes.—Yes, Mademoiselle Brazier has taken deadly aim at the old man's fortune.'

'From father to son she will have richly earned it,' said Goddet in his corner.

'You believe,' Max went on, after smiling at Goddet's remark, 'that I have laid a plot to marry Flore after the old man's death, and that then his sister, and this son, of whom I never heard till this instant, will endanger my future prospects?'

'That's it,' cried François.

'So we all think round this table,' said Baruch.

'Well, be calm, my boys,' replied Max; 'forewarned is forearmed. Now, I speak to the Knights of Idlesse. If, to be rid of these Parisians, I need the support of the Order, will you lend me a hand? Oh, within the limits we have prescribed for our pranks,' he quickly added, seeing a slight hesitancy. 'Do you suppose I want to murder or poison them?—Thank God, I am not a fool! And supposing, after all, that the Bridaus should win the day, and Flore should get no more than she has, I should be satisfied with that, do you hear? I like her well enough to prefer her to Mademoiselle Fichet, if Mademoiselle Fichet would have anything to say to me!'

Mademoiselle Fichet was the richest heiress of Issoudun; and the daughter's hand formed a large item in young Goddet's passion for her mother.

Plain speaking is so precious, that the eleven Knights rose as one man.

'You are of the right sort, Max!'

'That is something like, Max. We will be the Knights of Salvation.'

'Down with the Bridaus!'

'We will bridle the Bridaus!'

'After all, a sweetheart has been known to have three husbands!'

'Deuce take it, old Lousteau was fond of Madame Rouget, and there is less harm in courting a housekeeper free and unfettered!'

'And if old Rouget was Max's father more or less, it is all in the family!'

'Opinions are free!'

'Hurrah for Max!'

'Down with cant!'

'Let us drink the fair Flora's health!'

Such were the eleven answers, acclamations, or toasts that broke from the eleven Knights of Idlesse, the outcome, it must be owned, of their very low standard of morality. We see now what Max's object had been in

establishing himself as Grand Master of the Order. While inventing practical jokes, and making himself agreeable to the youth of the principal families, Max hoped to secure their suffrages in the day of his rehabilitation. He rose with a grace, lifted his glass full of Bordeaux, and all awaited his next speech.

'For all the ill I wish you, I only hope you may all get wives to compare with the fair Flore! As to the incursion of relations, for the present I am not alarmed; and later, we shall see!'

'We must not forget Fario's cart!'

'Oh, that is safe enough, by Jove!' said Goddet.

'I will see to the fitting conclusion of that joke,' cried Max. 'Be early at the market, and come and let me know when the old fellow comes to look for his cart.'

The clocks were striking half-past three in the morning; the Knights went away in silence to find their way home, hugging the wall, and not making a sound, all being shod with list shoes.

Max slowly walked up to the Place Saint-Jean in the upper part of the town, between the Porte Saint-Jean and the Porte Villate, the rich citizens' quarter. Major Gilet had dissembled his fears, but this news had hit him hard. Since his stay above or below decks he had acquired a power of dissimulation as great and deep as his depravement. In the first place, and above all, the forty thousand francs a year in land owned by Rouget was the whole of Gilet's passion for Flore Brazier, of that you may be sure! It may easily be seen from his mode of conduct what confidence she had led him to feel in her future fortune, as based on the old bachelor's affection. At the same time, the news that the legitimate heirs were on their way was enough to shake Max's faith in Flore's influence. The savings of the last seventeen years still stood in Rouget's name. Now if the will, which Flore declared had long since been executed in her

favour, should be revoked, these savings at any rate might be secured if they were invested in the name of Mademoiselle Brazier.

'In all these seven years, that idiot of a girl has never spoken a word about nephews and a sister!' said Max to himself, as he turned out the Rue Marmouse into the Rue l'Avenier. 'Seven hundred and fifty thousand francs in the hands of ten or twelve different notaries, at Bourges, Vierzon, and Châteauroux, cannot be drawn out or invested in State securities within a week without its being known in a land of "jaw." To begin with, we must pack off the relations; but once quit of them, we must make haste and secure that fortune. Well, I must think it over.'

Max was tired. He went into Rouget's house with a latch-key, and crept noiselessly to bed, saying to himself, 'To-morrow my ideas will be clearer.'

It will not be useless here to explain whence the Sultana of the Place Saint-Jean had obtained the nick-name of la Rabouilleuse, and how she had gained the command of the Rouget establishment.

As he had advanced in years, the old doctor, father of Jean-Jacques and of Madame Bridau, had become aware of his son's utter stupidity. He then held him very tight, trying to force him into habits which would take the place of wisdom; but by this means, without knowing it, he was preparing him to be tame under the first tyrant that might succeed in getting the halter round his neck. One day, as he rode home from his rounds, the wily and vicious old man saw a lovely little girl on the skirt of the water-meadow by the avenue to Tivoli. On hearing the horse, the child rose up from the bottom of one of the channels, which, seen from the height of Issoudun, look like silver ribbons on a green dress. Starting up like a naiad, the girl displayed to the doctor one of the sweetest virgin heads that ever painter dreamed

of. Old Rouget, who knew the whole neighbourhood, did not know this miracle of beauty. The child, almost naked, wore a tattered and scanty petticoat full of holes, and made of cheap woollen stuff, striped brown and white. A sheet of paper, fastened down by an osier withy, served her for a hat. Under this paper, scrawled over with strokes and O's, fully justifying its name of scribbling paper, was gathered up the most beautiful golden hair that any daughter of Eve could desire, fastened in a twist with a horse's curry-comb. Her pretty sunburnt bosom, scarcely covered by the rags of a handkerchief that had once been a bandana, showed its whiteness below the sunburn. The petticoat, pulled through between the legs and fastened by a coarse pin, looked a good deal like a swimmer's bathing drawers. Her feet and legs, visible through the clear water, were characterised by a slenderness worthy of the sculptors of the Middle Ages. This fair body, from exposure to the sun, had a rosy hue which was not ungraceful; the neck and bosom were worthy to be covered by a silken shawl. Finally, the nymph had blue eyes, shaded by lashes whose expression would have brought a painter or a poet to his knees. The doctor, enough of an anatomist to know a lovely figure, perceived that all the arts would be losers if this exquisite person were destroyed by field labour.

'Where do you come from, little one? I never saw you before,' said the old doctor of sixty-two.

The scene took place in the month of September 1799.

'I belong to Vatan,' replied the girl.

On hearing a town accent, an ill-looking man, about two hundred yards away, standing in the upper waters of the stream, raised his head.

'Now, then, what are you at, Flore?' he called out. 'Jabbering there instead of working; all the basketful will get off!'

'And what do you come here for from Vatan?' asked

the doctor, not troubling himself about this interruption.

'I *rabouille* for my uncle Brazier there.'

Rabouiller is a local word of le Berry, which perfectly describes the process it is meant to represent—the action of stirring the waters of a brooklet by beating them with a sort of large racket made of the branch of a tree. The crayfish, frightened by the commotion, of which they fail to see the purpose, hastily escape up stream, and in their agitation rush into the nets, which the poacher has placed at a proper distance. Flore Brazier held her racket, or *rabouilloir*, with the unconscious grace of innocence.

'But has your uncle got leave to fish for crayfish?'

'Well, and aren't we under the Republic one and indivisible?' shouted uncle Brazier from where he stood.

'We are under the Directory,' said the doctor; 'and I know of no law which will allow a man from Vatan to come and fish within the limits of the Commune of Issoudun.' Then he said to Flore, 'Is your mother living, child?'

'No, sir, and my father is in hospital at Bourges; he went mad after getting a sunstroke on his head in the fields——'

'How much do you earn?'

'Five sous a day all the season for crayfish—I goes to Braisne, ever so far, to beat the waters. Then in harvest-time, I gleans; and in winter, I spins.'

'You are about twelve, I suppose?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Would you like to come with me? You shall be well fed, nicely dressed, have pretty shoes——'

'No, no. My niece has got to stay wi' me. I have her in charge before God and man,' said uncle Brazier, who had come down to his niece and the doctor. 'I am her guardian, I am.'

The doctor preserved his gravity, suppressing a smile,

which would certainly have been too much for any one else at the sight of uncle Brazier. This 'guardian' had on a peasant's broad hat, ruined by the sun and rain, riddled like a cabbage leaf on which many caterpillars have resided, and sewn up with white cotton. Under this hat was a dark hollow face, in which mouth, nose, and eyes were four darker spots. His worn jacket was like a piece of patchwork, and his trousers were of sacking.

'I am Doctor Rouget,' said the physician; 'and, since you are the child's guardian, bring her to my house, Place Saint-Jean; it will not be a bad day's work for you or for her either.'

And without another word, feeling quite sure that he should see uncle Brazier in due course with the pretty Rabouilleuse, Doctor Rouget spurred his horse on the road to Issoudun. And, in fact, just as he was sitting down to dinner, his cook announced Citoyen and Citoyenne Brazier.

'Sit down,' said the doctor to the uncle and niece.

Flore and her guardian, both barefoot, looked round the doctor's dining-room with eyes amazed; and this was why.

The house, inherited by Rouget from old Descoings, stands in the middle of one side of the Place Saint-Jean, a long and very narrow square planted with a few sickly-looking lime-trees. The houses here are better built than in any other part of the town, and Descoings' is one of the best. This house, facing Monsieur Hochon's, has three windows on the front towards the square, on the first floor, and below them a carriage gate into the court-yard, behind which the garden lies. Under the arch-way of this carriage gate is a door into a large room with two windows to the street. The kitchen is behind this room, but cut off by a staircase leading to the first floor and attics above. At an angle with the kitchen are a wood-house, a shed where the washing was done, stabling

for two horses, and a coach-house ; and above them are lofts for corn, hay, and oats, besides a room where the doctor's man-servant slept.

The room, so much admired by the little peasant girl and her uncle, was decorated with carved wood in the style executed under Louis XV., and painted grey, and a handsome marble chimney-piece, above which Flore could see herself in a large glass reaching to the ceiling, and set in a carved and gilt frame. On the panels, at intervals, hung a few pictures, the spoil of the Abbeys of Déols, of Issoudun, of Saint-Gildas, of la Prée, of Chézal-Benoît, of Saint-Sulpice, and of the convents of Bourges and Issoudun, which had formerly been enriched by the liberality of kings and of the faithful with precious gifts and the finest works of the Renaissance. Thus, among the pictures preserved by Descoings and inherited by Rouget, there was a Holy Family by Albano, a Saint Jerome by Domenichino, a Head of Christ by Gian Bellini, a Virgin by Leonardo da Vinci, Christ bearing the Cross by Titian, from the Marchese di Belabre's collection—he who stood a siege and had his head cut off under Louis XIII. ; a Lazarus by Veronese, a Marriage of the Virgin by the Priest of Genoa, two Church pictures by Rubens, and a copy from Perugino by Perugino himself, or by Raphael ; finally, two Correggios and an Andrea del Sarto. The Descoings had chosen these from among three hundred, the spoils of churches, not in the least knowing their value, and selecting them solely for their better condition. Several had not merely magnificent frames, but were under glass. It was the beauty of the frames, and the value which the *panes* seemed to suggest, that had led to their choice.

Thus the furniture of the room was not devoid of the luxury so much prized in our days, though not at that time valued at Issoudun. The clock standing on the chimney-shelf between two superb silver chandeliers was distinguished by a solemn magnificence that betrayed the hand

of Boule. The armchairs in carved wood, fitted with worsted-work done by devout ladies of rank, would be highly prized in these days, for they all bore coronets and coats of arms. Between the two windows stood a handsome console, brought from some château, and on it an enormous Chinese jar, in which the doctor kept his tobacco.

Neither Rouget, nor his son, nor the cook, nor the man-servant, took the least care of these treasures. They spit into a fireplace of beautiful workmanship, and the gilt mouldings were variegated with verdigris. A pretty chandelier, partly of porcelain, was speckled, like the ceiling, with black spots, showing that the flies were at home there. The Descoings had hung the windows with brocade curtains, stripped from the bed of some Abbot. To the left of the door a cabinet worth some thousands of francs served as a sideboard.

'Now, Fanchette,' said the doctor to his cook, 'bring two glasses, and fetch us something good.'

Fanchette, a sturdy country servant, who was regarded as superior even to la Cognette and the best cook in Issoudun, flew with an alacrity that testified to the doctor's despotic rule, and also to some curiosity on her part.

'What is an acre of vine-land worth in your parts?' said the doctor, pouring out a glass of wine for Brazier.

'A hundred crowns in hard cash.'

'Well, leave your niece here as maid-servant; she shall have a hundred crowns for wages, and you, as her guardian, shall take the money——'

'Every year?' said Brazier, opening his eyes as large as saucers.

'I leave the matter to your conscience,' replied the doctor. 'She is an orphan. Till she is eighteen Flore will have none of the money.'

'She is goin' on for twelve,' said the uncle; 'that makes it up to six acres of vine-land. But she is sweetly

pretty, as mild as a lamb, very strong, very quick, very obedient. Poor creetur, she was the apple of his eye to my poor brother.'

'And I will pay a year in advance,' said the doctor.

'Lord A'mighty, make it two years, and us 'll consider it settled. She will be better off with you than down at our place, for my wife whacks her, she can't abide her. There's only me that purtects her, poor dear little creetur—as innocent as a new-born babe!'

On hearing this speech, the doctor, struck by the word innocent, signed to uncle Brazier, and led him out into the courtyard, and from thence into the garden, leaving the little Rabouilleuse looking at the table between Fanchette and Jean-Jacques, who cross-questioned her, and to whom she artlessly related her meeting with the doctor.

'Well, honey, good-bye,' said uncle Brazier on his return, kissing Flore on the forehead. 'You may thank me for a good job in leaving you with this kind and generous father of the poor. You've got to obey him like as you would me. Be a very good girl, and do what he tells you.'

'Get the room over mine ready,' said the doctor to Fanchette. 'This little Flora, who is certainly well named, will sleep there from this evening. To-morrow we will send for a shoemaker and a needlewoman. Now, lay a place for her at once; she will keep us company.'

That evening nothing was talked of in Issoudun but the introduction of a little 'Rabouilleuse' into Doctor Rouget's household. The nickname stuck to Mademoiselle Brazier in this land of mocking spirits, before, during, and after her rise to fortune.

The doctor aimed, no doubt, at doing for Flore, in a small way, what Louis xv. did on a large scale for Mademoiselle de Romans; but he set to work too late. Louis xv. was still young, while the doctor was on the verge of old age.

From twelve years old to fourteen the charming peasant girl enjoyed unmixed happiness. Nicely dressed, in infinitely better clothes than the richest Miss in Issoudun, she had a gold watch and trinkets, given her by the doctor to encourage her in her studies, for she had a master to teach her reading, writing, and account-keeping. But the almost animal life led by the peasantry had given Flore such an aversion for the bitter cup of learning, that the doctor got no further with her education.

His intentions with regard to this girl whom he was polishing, teaching, and training with a care that was all the more pathetic, because he had been supposed incapable of tenderness, were variously interpreted by the vulgar gossips of the town, whose tattle gave rise, as in the matter of Agathe's and Max's parentage, to serious mistakes. It is not easy for the population of a town to disentangle the truth from a thousand conjectures in the midst of contradictory comments, and among all the hypotheses to which a single fact gives rise. In the provinces, as formerly among the politicians of *la petite Provence* at the Tuileries, everything must be accounted for, and at last everybody knows everything. But each individual clings to the view of affairs that he prefers; that is the only true one, he can prove it, and believes his own version exclusively. Hence, notwithstanding the unscreened life and the espionage of a country town, the truth is often obscured, and can be detected only by the impartiality of the historian, or of a superior mind looking down from a higher point of view.

'What do you suppose that old ape wants, at his age, of a child of fifteen?' said one and another, two years after Flore's arrival.

'What indeed?' replied a third; 'his high days are long since past and gone.'

'My dear fellow, the doctor is disgusted with his idiot of a son, and he cannot get over his hatred of Agathe; in that dilemma perhaps he has been such a good boy

these two years past in order to marry the girl; and he might have a boy by her, strong and sturdy and wide awake like Max,' observed a wisehead.

'Get along! Do you suppose that after leading such a life as Lousteau and Rouget did between 1770 and 1787, a man of sixty-two is likely to have children? Not a bit of it; the old wretch has read his old testament, if only from a medical point of view, and he knows how King David warmed himself in his old age. That is all, my good fellow.'

'They say that Brazier, when he is fuddled, boasts at Vatan that he stole the child,' cried one of those people who prefer to believe the worst.

'Bless me! neighbour, and what won't folks say at Issoudun?'

From 1800 to 1805, for five years, the doctor had the pleasure of educating Flore without the worry which Mademoiselle de Romans is said to have given to Louis the Well-beloved by her ambitions and pretensions. The little Rabouilleuse was so happy, comparing the position she now was in with the life she would have led with her uncle, that she submitted, no doubt, to her master's requirements, as an Eastern slave does.

With all respect to the writers of idyls and to philanthropists, the sons of the soil have but vague notions of certain virtues; their scruples have their root in self-interest, not in any feeling for the good and beautiful; brought up to look forward to poverty, to incessant toil and want, the prospect makes them regard everything as allowable that can rescue them from the hell of hunger and everlasting labour, especially if it is not prohibited by law. If there are exceptions, they are rare. Virtue, socially speaking, is mated with ease, and begins with education. Flore Brazier was, therefore, an object of envy to every girl for six leagues round Issoudun, though in the eye of religion her conduct was in the highest degree reprehensible.

Flore, born in 1787, was brought up amid the Saturnalia of 1793 and 1798, whose lurid light was reflected on a land bereft of priesthood, worship, altars, or religious ceremonies, where marriage was a civil contract, and where revolutionary axioms left a deep impression, especially at Issoudun, where rebellion is traditional. Catholic worship was hardly re-established in 1802. The Emperor had some difficulty in finding priests; even in 1806 many a parish in France was still in widowhood, so slowly could a clergy decimated by the scaffold be reinstated after such violent dispersal. Hence, in 1802, there was nothing to accuse Flore but her own conscience. In uncle Brazier's ward was not conscience likely to prove weaker than interest? Though the cynical doctor's age led him, as there is every reason to suppose, to respect this maiden of fifteen, she was not the less regarded as a very wide-awake young person. However, some people insisted on finding a certificate of innocence in the cessation of the doctor's care and kindness; for the last two years of his life he treated her with more than coldness.

Old Rouget had killed enough people to be able to foresee his own end. His notary, finding him on his deathbed, wrapped in the cloak of encyclopedist philosophy, urged him to do something for the young girl, then seventeen years old.

'Very good, make her of age, emancipate her,' said he.

The reply is characteristic of this old man, who never failed to point his sarcasm with an allusion to the profession of the man he was answering. By veiling his evil deeds under a witticism he obtained forgiveness for them in a part of the world where wit always wins the day, especially when it is backed up by intelligent self-interest. The notary heard in this speech the concentrated hatred of a man whom Nature had balked of an intended debauch, and his revenge on the innocent object of his senile affection. This opinion was, to some extent, con-

firmed by the doctor's obduracy; he left nothing to la Rabouilleuse, saying with a bitter smile, 'Her beauty is wealth enough!' when the notary again pressed the matter.

Jean-Jacques Rouget did not mourn for the old man, but Flore did. The doctor had made his son very unhappy, especially since he had come of age, which was in 1791; whereas he had given the little peasant girl the material happiness which is the ideal of labouring folk. When, after the old man was buried, Fanchette said to Flore, 'Well, what is to become of you now that Monsieur is gone?' Jean-Jacques' eyes beamed, and for the first time in his life his stolid face lighted up, seemed to shine with a flash of thought, and expressed a feeling.

'Leave her with me,' said he to Fanchette, who was clearing the table.

Flore, at seventeen, still had that refinement of figure and face, that elegance of beauty which had bewitched the doctor; women of the world know how to preserve it, but in a peasant girl it fades as swiftly as the flowers of the field. At the same time, the tendency to become stout, which comes to all handsome country women when they do not lead a life of toil and privation in the open fields and sunshine, was already noticeable in Flore. Her bust was large, her round, white shoulders were richly moulded and finely joined to a throat that already showed fat wrinkles. But the shape of her face was still pure, and her chin as yet delicately cut.

'Flore,' said Jean-Jacques in agitated tones, 'you are quite used to this house?'

'Yes, Monsieur Jacques.'

On the very verge of a declaration, the heir felt his tongue tied by the remembrance of the dead man but now laid in his grave, and wondered to what lengths his father's benevolence might have gone. Flore, looking at her new master, and incapable of imagining his

simplicity, waited for some minutes for Jean-Jacques to proceed; but she presently left him, not knowing what to think of his obstinate silence. Whatever education she might have had from the doctor, it was many a day before she understood the character of his son, of whom this, in a few words, is the history.

At his father's death, Jacques, now thirty-seven years old, was as timid and as submissive to parental discipline as any boy of twelve. This timidity will account for his childhood, youth, and life to such readers as might not otherwise believe in such a character, or the facts of a story which is common, alas! in every rank of life—even among princes, for Sophie Dawes was taken up by the last of the Condés in a worse position than that of la Rabouilleuse. There are two kinds of timidity—timidity of mind, and timidity of the nerves; physical timidity, and moral timidity. Each is independent of the other. The body may be frightened and quake while the mind remains calm and bold, and *vice versâ*. This is the key to many eccentricities of conduct. When both kinds meet in the same man he will be good for nothing all his life. This utter timidity is that of the person of whom we say, 'He is imbecile.' Still, this imbecility sometimes covers great qualities though suppressed. To this double infirmity perhaps do we owe certain monks who have lived in ecstasy. This unhappy moral and physical disposition may be produced by the perfection of the bodily organs and of the soul, as well as by certain defects, as yet not fully studied.

Jean-Jacques' timidity arose from a certain torpor of his faculties, which a first-rate tutor, or a surgeon like Desplein, would have roused. In him, as in crétins, the sensual side of love had absorbed the strength and energy which his intelligence lacked, though he had sense enough to conduct himself through life. The violence of his passion, stripped of the ideal, in which it blossoms in other young men, added to his timidity.

He never could make up his mind to go courting, to use a familiar expression, to any woman in Issoudun. Now no young girl or woman could make advances to an under-sized man, with a vulgar face, which two prominent green-gooseberry eyes would have made ugly enough, if pinched features and a sallow complexion had not made him look old before his time. In fact, the vicinity of a woman annihilated the poor boy, who was goaded by his passion as vehemently as he was bridled by the few notions he had derived from his education. Halting between two equal forces, he did not know what to say, and dreaded to be asked a question, so terrified was he at having to reply. Desire, which generally loosens a man's tongue, froze his.

So Jean-Jacques lived solitary and sought solitude, not finding it irksome. The doctor saw, too late to remedy them, the disastrous results of this temperament and character. He would gladly have seen his son married; but as that would have been to subject him to a rule which would soon be despotic, he could not but hesitate. Would not that be to hand over his fortune to the management of a stranger, an unknown woman? Now he well knew how difficult it is to foresee, from a study of a young girl, exactly what the woman's character may become. And so, while looking about him for a daughter-in-law whose education or whose ideas should be a sufficient guarantee, he tried to guide his son into the paths of avarice. Failing intelligence, he hoped thus to give this simpleton a guiding instinct. He began by accustoming him to a mechanical existence, and gave him fixed notions as to the investment of money; then he spared him the chief difficulties of the management of landed estate by leaving all his lands in capital order, and let on long leases. And for all that, the principal fact, which was to be paramount in this poor creature's life, escaped the doctor's penetration — Jean-Jacques was passionately in love with la Rabouilleuse.

Nothing could, indeed, be more natural. Flore was the only woman with whom the young man came in contact, the only woman he ever saw at his ease, gazing on her in secret, and watching her from hour to hour; for him Flore was the light of his father's house; without knowing it, she afforded him the only pleasures that gilded his youth. Far from being jealous of his father, he was delighted by the education he bestowed on Flore: was not the wife he needed an approachable woman who would need no courting? For passion, be it observed, brings insight with it; it can give a sort of intelligence to simpletons, fools, and idiots, especially during youth. In the least human soul we always find the animal instinct which, in its persistency, is like a thought.

Next day, Flore, who had meditated on her master's silence, expected some important communication; but, though he hovered about her, looking at her with covert, amorous glances, Jean-Jacques found nothing to say. At last, at dessert, the master began again as he had begun yesterday.

'You are comfortable here?' he asked Flore.

'Yes, Monsieur Jean.'

'Well, stay then.'

'Thank you, Monsieur Jean.'

This strange state of things lasted for three weeks. One night, when not a sound broke the stillness, Flore, waking by chance, heard the regular breathing of a man at her door, and was frightened at finding Jean-Jacques lying on the mat like a dog, having, no doubt, made some little hole at the bottom of the door to see into the room.

'He is in love with me,' thought she; 'but he will get the rheumatism at this game.'

Next day Flore looked at her master in a marked way. This speechless and almost instinctive love had touched her; she no longer thought the poor simple creature so hideous, in spite of the ulcer-like spots on his

temples and forehead, the terrible coronal of vitiated blood.

'You do not want to go back to the open fields, I suppose?' said Jean-Jacques, when they were alone.

'Why do you ask?' said she, looking at him.

'I wanted to know——' replied Rouget, turning the colour of a boiled lobster.

'Do you want me to go?' she asked.

'No, Mademoiselle.'

'Well, then, what is it you want to know? You have some reason——'

'Yes, I wanted to know——'

'What?' said Flore.

'You would not tell me.'

'Yes, on my word as an honest woman.'

'Ah! That is the point,' said Rouget alarmed. 'You are an honest woman?'

'By Heaven!'

'Yes—really?'

'Since I say it——!'

'Come, now. Are you the same now as you were when you stood there, barefoot, brought here by your uncle?'

'A pretty question, on my word!' exclaimed Flore, reddening.

The heir bent his head in silence, and did not look up again. Flore, astounded at finding her reply, so flattering to the man, received with such consternation, left the room.

Three days later, at the same hour, for they both seemed to regard the dessert as the scene of battle. Flore was the first to say to her master, 'Are you vexed with me for anything?'

'No, Mademoiselle,' he replied. 'No . . . on the contrary——'

'You seemed so much annoyed the other day at hearing that I was an honest girl——'

'No; I only wanted to know . . . but you would not tell me.'

'On my honour,' said she, 'I will tell you the whole truth.'

'The whole truth about . . . my father——' said he in a choked voice.

'Your father,' said she, looking straight into her master's eyes, 'was a good fellow; he loved a laugh. . . . Well, a little. . . . Poor dear man, it was not for want of will. And then he had some grievance against you, I don't know what, and he had intentions—oh! unfortunate intentions.—He often made me laugh; well! that is all. And what then?'

'Well, then, Flore,' said the heir, taking the girl's hand, 'since my father was nothing to you——'

'Why, what did you suppose he was to me?' she exclaimed, in the tone of a girl offended by an insulting suggestion.

'Well, then, listen to me.'

'He was my benefactor, that was all. Ah! he would have liked to make me his wife . . . but——'

'But,' said Rouget, taking her hand again, for she had pulled it away, 'since he was nothing of the kind, you can stay here with me?'

'If you like,' said she, looking down.

'No, no. It is if you like, *you*,' replied Rouget. 'Yes, you may be—mistress here. All that is here shall be yours; you shall take care of my fortune; it will be the same as your own. For I love you, and I always have loved you, from the moment when you first came in—here—there—barefoot.'

Flore made no reply. The silence became awkward, and Jean-Jacques then uttered this odious argument—

'Come, it would be better than going back to the fields, wouldn't it?' he asked, with manifest eagerness.

'Dame! Monsieur Jean, as you please,' said she.

But notwithstanding this 'as you please,' poor Rouget

was no forwarder. Men of that type must have a certainty. The effort it is to them to confess their love is so great, and costs them so dear, that they know they can never do it again. Hence their attachment to the first woman who accepts them.

Events can only be inferred from the results. Ten months after his father's death, Jean-Jacques was another man; his pallid, leaden-hued face, disfigured by little boils on the temples and forehead, had lighted up, grown clear-skinned, and acquired a rosy tinge. His countenance shone with happiness. Flore insisted on her master's taking the greatest care of his person, and made it a point of honour to herself that he should be neatly dressed; she would look after him as he went out for a walk, standing on the doorstep till he was out of sight. All the town observed this alteration, which had made a new creature of Jean-Jacques Rouget.

'Have you heard the news?' asked one and another in Issoudun.

'Why—what?'

'Jean has inherited everything from his father, even la Rabouilleuse——'

'Did you suppose that the old doctor was not sharp enough to leave his son a housekeeper?'

'She is a perfect treasure for Rouget, that is certain,' was the general cry.

'She is a crafty one! She is very handsome; she will make him marry her.'

'What luck that girl has had!'

'It is the luck that only comes to handsome girls.'

'Pooh, nonsense! So you fancy. But there was my uncle, Borniche-Hérau; well, you have heard speak of Mademoiselle Ganivet; she was as ugly as the seven deadly sins, and he left her no less than a thousand crowns a year——'

'Bah! that was in 1778!'

'All the same, Rouget is a fool; his father left him

at least forty thousand francs a year. He might have married Mademoiselle Hérau.'

'The doctor tried that on, but she would have nothing to say to it; Rouget is too great an idiot——'

'An idiot! Women are very happy with men of that sort.'

'Is your wife happy?'

Such were the comments current in Issoudun. Though, after the manners and customs of the provinces, the world began by laughing at this quasi-marriage, it ended by admiring Flore for devoting herself to this poor creature. This was how Flore Brazier rose to sovereignty over the house of Rouget, 'from father to son,' to quote the words of Goddet *junior*. It will now not be useless to sketch the history of her rule for the better information of other bachelors.

The only person in Issoudun to complain of Flore Brazier's installation as queen on Jean-Jacques Rouget's hearth was old Fanchette; she protested against such an immoral state of affairs, and took the part of outraged decency. To be sure, she felt humiliated at her age at having for her mistress a Rabouilleuse, a girl who had come to the house without a shoe to her foot. Fanchette had three hundred francs a year from securities in the funds, for the doctor had made her invest her savings, and her late master had left her an annuity of a hundred crowns, so she could live comfortably; and she left the house nine months after her old master's funeral, on the 15th of April 1806. To the perspicacious reader, this will seem to mark the date when Flore ceased to be 'an honest girl.'

La Rabouilleuse, keen enough to foresee Fanchette's defection—for there is nothing like exercise of power to inculcate politics—had made up her mind to do without a maid. For the last six months she had, without betraying it, been studying the culinary arts which made

Fanchette a *cordon bleu* worthy to cater for a doctor. As epicures, doctors may rank with bishops. Doctor Rouget had perfected Fanchette. In the country the lack of occupation, and the monotony of life, are apt to turn an active mind to cooking. Dinners are not so luxurious as in Paris, but they are better; the dishes are studied and thought out. Buried in the country, there are Carêmes in petticoats, undiscovered geniuses, who know how to turn out a simple dish of beans worthy of the approving nod with which Rossini welcomes a perfectly successful effort.

The doctor, while studying for his degree at Paris, had followed Rouelle's course of chemistry, and had picked up some notions, which he turned to account in culinary chemistry. He is remembered at Issoudun for various improvements little known beyond the limits of le Berry. He discovered that an omelette is far more delicate when the white and yolk of the eggs are not beaten together in the rough-and-ready fashion in which most cooks perform the operation. By his recipe, the white should be beaten to a stiff froth, and the yolk added by degrees. Then it should not be cooked in a frying-pan, but in a *cagnard* of china or earthenware. A *cagnard* is a sort of thick dish on four feet, which, when it is placed on the charcoal stove, allow the air to surround it, and so prevent its cracking. In Touraine, the *cagnard* is called a *cauquemarre*. Rabelais, I think, speaks of a *cauquemarre* for cooking the coquecigrues, which shows the high antiquity of the utensil. The doctor had also discovered a way of preventing the burnt flavour of brown sauce; but this secret, which he unfortunately kept in his own kitchen, has been lost.

Flore, born with the gift of frying and roasting, the two arts which neither study nor experience can acquire, was soon Fanchette's superior. In making herself a *cordon bleu*, she was thinking of Jean-Jacques' comfort; still, she too, it must be owned, was not a little greedy.

Like all uneducated persons, being unable to occupy her brain, she expended her energies in the house. She rubbed up the furniture, restored its lustre, and kept everything throughout the house in a state of cleanliness worthy of Holland. She directed the avalanches of dirty linen, and the deluge known as a great wash, which, in the French provinces, takes place but three times a year. She examined the linen with a housewifely eye, and mended it with care. Then, anxious to initiate herself by degrees into the secrets of wealth, she mastered the small knowledge of business possessed by Rouget, and increased it by talking with Monsieur Héron, the late doctor's notary. Thus she could give her little Jean-Jacques excellent advice. Sure, as she was, of remaining mistress of the position, she nursed the poor fellow's interests with as much care and parsimony as if they had been her own. She had nothing to fear from her uncle's demands. Two months after the doctor's death, Brazier died of a fall as he came out of the tavern where, since fortune had visited him, he passed all his time. Flore's father was also dead; thus she served her master with all the affection due from an orphan who was happy to be able to make herself a home and find some interest in life.

This period was paradise to poor Jean Jacques, who acquired the easy habits of an animal existence, graced by a sort of monastic regularity. He slept very late in the morning; Flore, who was up at daybreak to buy provisions or do the work of the house, woke her master in time for him to find breakfast ready as soon as he was dressed. After breakfast, at about eleven o'clock, Jean-Jacques took a walk, chatted with any one he met, came home by three o'clock to read the papers—that of the department, and a Paris paper, which he received three days after publication, greasy from thirty hands through which they had passed, dirty from the snuffy noses that smeared them, brown from the many tables they had lain

on. Thus our bachelor got to the dinner-hour, and he spent as long a time as he could over it. Flore told him stories of the town, and all the current gossip she had picked up. By eight o'clock the lights were out. Early to bed is, in the country, a common form of saving in candles and firing, but it tends to stupefy folks by an abuse of bed; too much sleep deadens and stultifies the mind.

Such, for nine years, was the life of these two beings —a life at once busy and vacuous, of which the chief events were a few journeys to Bourges, to Vierzon, to Châteauroux, or even a little further, when neither Monsieur Héron nor the notaries of those towns had any mortgages to offer. Rouget invested his money in first mortgages at five per cent., with substitution in favour of the wife when the lender should marry. He never advanced more than a third of the real value of the estate, and he had bills drawn to his order representing an additional two and a half per cent., for dates at intervals during the loan. These were the rules impressed on him by his father. Usury, the drag on peasant ambitions, is eating up the land, and this charge of seven and a half per cent. seemed so reasonable, that Jean-Jacques Rouget could pick and choose; for the notaries, who extracted handsome commissions from the clients for whom they got money so cheap, would give the old fellow notice.

During these nine years, Flore gradually, insensibly, and without intending it, had acquired absolute dominion over her master. From the first she treated Jean-Jacques with great familiarity; then, without failing in respect, she gained the upper hand by such manifest superiority of intelligence and power, that he became his servant's servant. This grown-up child went half-way to meet this dominion, by allowing himself to be so much waited on, that Flore treated him as a mother treats her son. And at last his feeling for her was that

which makes a mother's care necessary to a child. But there were other and far stronger bonds. In the first place, Flore managed all business matters, and carried on the house. Jean-Jacques relied on her so absolutely for every kind of stewardship that, without her, life would have seemed to him not difficult, but impossible. The woman had also become necessary to his existence; she humoured all his fancies—she knew them so well! He liked to see the happy face that always smiled on him; the only face that ever had smiled on him, or that ever would smile on him! Her happiness, purely material, expressed by the common phrases that are the backbone of language in the households of le Berry, and expansive in her splendid person, was, in a way, the reflection of his own. The state into which Jean-Jacques collapsed when he saw Flore clouded by some little annoyance betrayed to the woman the extent of her power; and she, to secure it, would try to exert it. In women of that kind use always means abuse. La Rabouilleuse, no doubt, made her master play his part in some of the scenes that lie buried in the mystery of private life, and of which Otway has shown a specimen in the midst of his tragedy of *Venice Preserved* between the Senator and Aquilina—a scene that gives the magnificence of horror. And then Flore saw herself so secure in her empire, that she never thought of getting the old bachelor to marry her, unfortunately for him and for herself.

By the end of 1815, at the age of twenty-seven, Flore was in the fullest bloom of her beauty. Buxom and fair, as white-skinned as a farmeress of le Bessin, she was the ideal of what our forefathers would have called a splendid wench. Her beauty, somewhat of the inn-servant order, but filled-out and well fed, gave her some resemblance, apart from Mademoiselle Georges' imperial beauty, to that actress at her best. Flore had the same beautiful, dazzling white arms, the fulness of outline, the pulpy

sheen, the delicious modelling, but all less classically severe. The expression of her face was tender and sweet. Her eye could not command respect, like that of the most beautiful Agrippine who has ever trod the boards of the Théâtre Français since Racine's time; it invited to sensual joys.

In 1816 la Rabouilleuse first saw Maxence Gilet, and fell in love with him at first sight. Her heart was pierced by the mythological dart—that admirable symbol of a natural fact which the Greeks inevitably represented thus, having never conceived of the chivalrous ideal and melancholy passion begotten of Christianity. Flore was at this time too handsome for Max to scorn such a conquest. And thus, at eight-and-twenty, the girl first knew real love, idolatrous, infinite love, the love which includes every mode of loving from that of Gulnare to that of Medora. As soon as the penniless officer understood the respective positions of Flore and Jean-Jacques Rouget, he saw something better than a mere love affair in a connection with la Rabouilleuse. And so, for the better security of his future prospects, he was more than content to lodge under Rouget's roof, seeing how weakly a creature the old fellow was.

Flore's passion could not fail to have its influence on Jean-Jacques' life and surroundings. For a month Rouget, who had become excessively afraid of her, saw Flore's smiling and friendly face grown gloomy and cross. He endured the brunt of intentional ill-temper exactly like a married man whose wife is contemplating a betrayal. When in the midst of her most spiteful outbreaks the hapless man made so bold as to ask the cause of this change, her eyes flashed with fires of hatred, and her voice was hard with aggressive tones of scorn, such as poor Jean-Jacques had never met nor heard.

'By Heaven!' she exclaimed, 'you have neither heart nor soul. For sixteen years have I been wasting my youth here, and I never discovered that you had a stone

there!' and she struck her heart. 'For two months past you have seen that brave Major coming here, a victim to the Bourbons, who was cut out for a General, and who is down on his luck, driven into a hole of a place like this, where Fortune is too poor to go out walking. He is obliged to sit, stuck to a chair all day in an office, to earn what? Six hundred wretched francs—a handsome income! And you, who have six hundred and fifty-nine thousand francs in snug investments, and sixty thousand francs a year—not to say that, thanks to me, you don't spend a thousand crowns a year for everything included, even my clothes—in short, everything—you never think of offering him shelter here, where the whole top floor is empty! No, you would let the rats and mice keep up a dance there rather than put a human being in, and he a man your father always regarded as his son!—Do you want to know what you are? Well, I will tell you—you are a fratricide! And you think I don't know why? You saw that I felt an interest in him, and that nettled you! For all that you seem such a blockhead, you have more cunning in you than the cunningest, and that is what you are. . . . Very well then, I do take an interest in him . . . a warm one at that . . .'

'But, Flore . . .'

'Oh, there is no "but, Flore," in the case. You may go and look for another Flore—if you can find one!—For may this glass of wine poison me if I don't turn out of your hovel of a house! I shall have cost you nothing, thank God, during the twelve years I have stayed in it, and you have had your comforts cheap! Anywhere else I could have earned my living by working as I do here; washing, ironing, taking care of the linen, going to market, cooking, looking after your interests in every way, slaving to death from morning till night.—And this is what I get!'

'But, Flore . . .'

'Oh yes, Flore indeed! A pretty Flore you will get, at fifty-one, as you are, and in very bad health, and stooping so that it is frightful to see—I know all about it. And with all that you are not so very amusing . . .'

'But, Flore . . .'

'There, leave me in peace.'

And she left the room, slamming the door with such violence that the house rang with it and seemed to shake on its foundations. Jean-Jacques Rouget opened it very gently, and more gently still went into the kitchen where Flore was muttering.

'But, Flore,' said this sheep, 'this is the very first I have heard of your wishes; how can you tell whether I will or will not?'

'In the first place,' she went on, 'we ought to have a man in the house. It is known that you have ten, fifteen, twenty thousand francs, and if any one wanted to rob you we should be murdered. For my part, I have no wish to wake up one fine morning cut into four quarters, like the poor servant girl who was fool enough to try to defend her master. Well! But if it were known that we had a man on the premises who is as brave as Cæsar, and has the use of his hands—Max could settle three thieves while you were talking about it. —Well, I say, I should sleep easier. People will cram you with nonsense. Here, I am in love with him; there, I adore him! Do you know what you have got to say? Well, just tell them that you know all that, but that your father told you on his deathbed to take care of his poor Max. Then every one must hold their tongue, for the flagstones of Issoudun could tell you that your father paid for his schooling—so there! For nine years I have eaten your bread . . .'

'Flore, Flore . . .'

'And more than one young fellow in this town has come to me a-courtin'—so there!—And one offers me a gold chain, and another a gold watch: "Dear little Flore,

if only you would come away from that old idiot of a Rouget," that is the sort of thing they say of you! "What, I! leave him?—I should think so! such an innocent as that.—Why, what would become of him?" I have always answered. "No, no, where a Nanny is tethered she must eat . . ."'

'Yes, Flore, I have no one in the world but you, and I am only too happy. If it will give you pleasure, child, we will have Maxence Gilet in the house; he can eat with us . . .'

'By Heaven! I should hope so!'

'There, there, don't be angry . . .'

'Enough for one is enough for two,' said she, laughing. 'But now, if you are very nice, do you know what you will do, my dear old boy? You will take a turn in front of the Mairie at about four o'clock, and manage to meet Major Gilet, and ask him to dinner. If he makes any difficulties, tell him it is to please me; he is too polite to refuse that. And then, over your dessert, if he talks of his misfortunes, or of the hulks—and you can surely have sense enough to lead up to the subject—you will offer him a home here. If he makes any objection, never mind; I will find a way to persuade him——'

As he slowly paced the Boulevard Baron, Rouget, so far as he was capable, thought over this incident. If he were to part with Flore—and the mere idea made him dizzy—what woman could he find to take her place? Marry? At his age he would be married for his money, and even more cruelly handled by a legitimate wife than he was by Flore. Moreover, the notion of being bereft of her affection, even if it were a delusion, was intolerably painful. So he was as charming to Major Gilet as he knew how to be. As Flore had wished, the invitation was given in the presence of witnesses, so as to leave Max's honour clear.

Flore and her master were reconciled; but from that day Jean-Jacques was aware of shades of demeanour

proving a complete change in la Rabouilleuse's affection for him.

For about a fortnight Flore complained loudly to the tradespeople, at market, and to her gossips, of Monsieur Rouget's tyranny in taking it into his head to have his natural half-brother under his roof. But no one was taken in by this farce, and Flore was considered an extremely shrewd and wily creature.

Old Rouget was made very happy by the installation of Max as a member of the household, for in him he had a companion who was most carefully attentive to him without servility. Gilet chatted, talked politics, and sometimes walked out with him.

As soon as the officer was quite at home, Flore refused to be cook any longer; 'kitchen work spoiled her hands,' she said. By desire of the Grand Master of the Order, la Cognette found a relation of her own, an old maid, whose master, a curé, had just died, leaving her nothing, an excellent cook, who would devote herself through life and death to Flore and Max. And, in the name of these two potentates, la Cognette could promise her relation a pension of three hundred francs after ten years of good, honest, and loyal service. La Védie, who was sixty, was remarkable for a face deeply marked by smallpox and of suitable ugliness.

When she assumed her functions Flore became Mademoiselle Brazier. She wore stays, she dressed in silk, in fine woollen stuffs, or in cambric, according to the season. She had collars, costly kerchiefs, embroidered caps and lace tuckers, wore dainty boots, and kept herself in an elegant and handsome style that made her look younger. She was now like a rough diamond that has been cut and set by the jeweller to show off its value. She was anxious to do Max credit. By the end of that year, 1817, she had procured a horse from Bourges, said to be of English breed, for the poor Major, who was tired of going about on foot. Max had

picked up in the neighbourhood a man, a Pole named Kouski, formerly a lancer in the Imperial Guard, and now reduced to misery, who was only too glad to find a berth at Monsieur Rouget's as the Major's servant. Max was Kouski's idol, especially after the fray with the three Royalists. So after 1817 the Rouget household consisted of five persons, three of them idle; and the expenses amounted to about eight thousand francs a year.

By the time when Madame Bridau came back to Issoudun to save her inheritance, as Maître Desroches expressed it, so seriously endangered, Père Rouget, as he was commonly called, had by degrees lapsed into an almost vegetative existence. To begin with, from the day when Max was at home in the house, Mademoiselle Brazier kept house with quite Episcopal luxury. Rouget, thus led into high living, and tempted by the excellent dishes concocted by la Védie, ate more and more every day. Notwithstanding such abundant and nutritious feeding, he did not get fat. He grew every day more bent, like a man tired out—perhaps by the effort of digestion—and his eyes sank in puffy circles. Still, when, in his walks, any one asked after his health: 'I never was better in my life,' was always his reply. As he had always been known to have a most limited intellect, the gradual deterioration of his faculties was not observed. His love for Flore was the one emotion that kept him alive; he existed only for her; his weakness before her knew no measure; he obeyed her every look and watched this creature's movements as a dog watches his master's least gesture. And, as Madame Hochon said, Père Rouget, at fifty-seven, looked older than Monsieur Hochon, who was eighty.

As may easily be supposed, Max's rooms were worthy of so charming a youth. And in six years, year by year, the Major had made the comfort of his lodgings more perfect, and added grace to the smallest details, as much

for his own sake as for Flore's. Still, it was only the comfort of Issoudun ; painted floors, wall-papers of some elegance, mahogany furniture, mirrors in gilt frames, muslin curtains with red bands to loop them, an Arabian bedstead with curtains hung as a country upholsterer arranges them for a wealthy bride, and which then seemed the height of magnificence, but which are to be seen in the commonest fashion-plates, and are so general now that in Paris even petty dealers will not have them when they marry. Then—an unheard-of thing, which gave rise to much talk in Issoudun—there was matting on the stairs, to deaden noise no doubt ! And, in fact, Max, as he came in before daybreak, woke nobody, and Rouget never suspected his lodger's share in the dark deeds of the Knights of Idlesse.

At about eight in the morning Flore, in a pretty pink-striped cotton wrapper and a lace cap, her feet in furred slippers, gently opened Max's bedroom door, but seeing him asleep, she stood a moment by the bed.

'He came in so late,' thought she ; 'at half-past three. A man must be made of iron to be able to stand such racket as that ! And isn't he strong too ?—The love of a man ! I wonder what they were doing last night !'

'You, my little Flore,' said Max, waking as a soldier wakes, inured by the vicissitudes of war to find all his wits and his presence of mind however suddenly he may be roused.

'You are sleepy ; I am going . . .'

'No, stay ; there are serious things——'

'You have done something too mad last night ?'

'Ah, pooh ! The matter in hand concerns that old fool. Look here ; you never mentioned his family. Well, they are coming here—his family is coming, to cut us out no doubt.'

'Oh, I will give them a startler !' said Flore.

'Mademoiselle Brazier,' said Max gravely, 'matters

are too serious to be taken at a rush. Send me up my coffee; I will have it in bed, where I will consider what proceedings we must take. . . . Come back at nine, and we will talk it over. Meanwhile behave as if you had heard nothing.'

Startled by this news, Flore left Max, and went to make his coffee; but a quarter of an hour later Baruch rushed in and said to the Grand Master, 'Fario is looking for his cart.'

Max was dressed in five minutes, went downstairs, and with an air of lounging for his pleasure, made his way to the foot of the tower hill, where he saw a considerable crowd.

'What is the matter?' said Max, making his way through the mob to speak to the Spaniard.

Fario, a small, shrivelled man, was ugly enough to have been a grandee. His very fiery, very small eyes, very close together, would have earned him at Naples a reputation for the evil eye. The little man seemed gentle because he was grave, quiet, and slow in his movements; and he was commonly spoken of as *bonhomme*, good old Fario. But his complexion, of the colour of gingerbread, and his gentle manner, concealed from the ignorant, but betrayed to the knowing, his character as a half-Moorish peasant from Grenada, who had not yet been roused from his torpid indifference.

'But are you sure,' said Max, after listening to the lamentations of the seed-merchant, 'that you brought your cart? For, thank Heaven, we have no thieves in Issoudun . . .'

'I left it there . . .'

'But if the horse was harnessed to it, may he not have gone away with the cart?'

'There is my horse,' said Fario, pointing to his steed standing harnessed about thirty yards off.

Max solemnly went to the spot, so as to be able by looking up to see the foot of the tower, for the people

had collected at the bottom of the hill. Everybody followed him, and this was what the rascal wanted.

'Has any one by mistake put a cart in his pocket?' cried François.

'Come, feel, turn them out!' said Baruch. Shouts of laughter rose on all sides. Fario swore; now in a Spaniard an oath means the last pitch of fury.

'Is yours a light cart?' asked Max.

'Light?' retorted Fario. 'If all those who are laughing at me had it over their toes, their corns would not hurt them again.'

'Well, but it must be devilish light,' replied Max, pointing to the tower, 'for it has flown to the top of the hill.'

At these words all looked up, and for a moment there was almost a riot in the market-place. Every one was pointing to this magical vehicle. Every tongue was wagging.

'The Devil has a care for the innkeepers, who are all doomed to perdition,' said Goddet to the speechless owner; 'he wants to teach you not to leave carts about instead of putting up at the inn.'

At this speech the mob howled, for Fario was reckoned miserly.

'Come, my good man,' said Max, 'do not lose heart. We will go up and see how the cart got there. The deuce is in it! We will lend you a hand. Will you come, Baruch?—You,' he added in a whisper to François, 'clear every one out of the way, and mind there is no one standing below when you see us at the top.'

Fario, with Max, Baruch, and three more of the Knights, climbed up to the tower. During the scramble, which was not free from danger, Max remarked to Fario that there were no tracks, nor anything to show how the cart had been got up. And Fario began to believe in some magic; he had quite lost his head. On reaching the top and examining matters, the feat seriously seemed quite impossible.

'And however shall we get it down again?' said the Spaniard, whose little eyes expressed positive terror, while his tawny hollow face, which looked as if it could never change colour, turned pale.

'Well,' said Max, 'I see no difficulty in that.'

And taking advantage of Fario's bewilderment, he took the cart up by the shafts, giving it a tilt with his strong arms so as to give it impetus; then, at the moment when he let it go, he shouted in a voice of thunder, 'Look out below!' But there was no danger. The crowd, warned by François, and eager with curiosity, had withdrawn to a little distance to see what was going on on the knoll. The cart smashed in picturesque style, broken into a thousand pieces.

'There, it is down again!' said Baruch.

'Ah, blackguards, thieves, villains!' yelled Fario. 'It was you who got it up, I'll be bound!'

Max, Baruch, and their three comrades began to laugh at the Spaniard's abuse.

'We wanted to do you a service,' said Max haughtily. 'To save your damned cart I ran the risk of going down on the top of it, and this is how you thank me. What country do you come from, pray?'

'From a country where we do not forgive an injury,' replied Fario, quivering with rage. 'My cart may serve you a turn to take you to the Devil! Unless,' he added, as mild as a lamb, 'you like to replace it by a new one?'

'We will talk about it,' said Max, going down the hill.

When they were at the bottom, and had rejoined the first group of laughers, Max took Fario by the jacket-button, and said—

'Yes, my good Fario, I will make you a present of a splendid cart if you will give me two hundred and fifty francs; I won't guarantee that, like this one, it is warranted for a tumbler's trap.'

This jest, however, touched Fario no more than if he were concluding an ordinary bargain.

'Dame!' he replied calmly, 'you will give me francs enough to replace my poor cart, and you will never spend Père Rouget's money in a better cause.'

Max turned white and lifted his formidable fist to strike Fario; but Baruch, who knew that such a blow would not fall only on the Spaniard, whisked him off like a feather, saying to Max in an under tone, 'Don't play the fool!'

The Major, recalled to order, began to laugh, and said to Fario, 'Though I have by accident damaged your cart, you are trying to slander me, so we are quits.'

'Not yet,' muttered Fario. 'But I am glad to have found out what my cart is worth!'

'Ah, ha! Max, you have found your match!' said a bystander, who was not a member of the Order.

'Good-bye, Monsieur Gilet; you have not heard the last of your clever trick!' said the Spaniard, mounting his horse and disappearing in the midst of a loud hurrah!

'I will keep the iron tires for you,' cried a wheelwright, who had come up to study the effects of the fall. One of the shafts was standing upright, planted in the ground like a tree.

Max was pale and thoughtful, stung to the heart by the Spaniard's speech. For five days at Issoudun Fario's cart was the talk of the town. It was fated to travel far, as young Goddet said, for it made the round of the province, where the pranks of Max and Baruch were much discussed. Hence, even a week after the event, the Spaniard was still the talk of the departments and the subject of much 'jaw,' a fact to which he was keenly alive. Max and la Rabouilleuse, too, as a result of the vindictive Spaniard's retort, were the subject of endless comments, whispered indeed at Issoudun, but loudly spoken at Bourges, at Vatan, at Vierzon, and at Châteauroux. Maxence Gilet knew the country well enough to imagine how envenomed these remarks must be.

'No one can hinder their talking,' thought he. 'Ah! that was a bad night's work.'

'Well, Max,' said François, taking his arm, 'they are to be here to-night.'

'Who?'

'The Bridaus. My grandmother has just had a letter from her goddaughter.'

'Listen to me, my boy,' said Max in his ear; 'I have thought this business over very seriously. Neither Flore nor I must appear to have any ill-feeling towards the Bridaus. If the heirs leave Issoudun, it is your people, the Hochons, who must seem to be the cause. Study these Paris folks well; and when I have taken their measure, to-morrow at la Cognette's we will see what can be done with them, and how we can make a breach between them and your grandfather.'

'The Spaniard has found the joint in Max's harness,' said Baruch to his cousin François as they went in, looking at his friend entering Rouget's door.

While Max was thus occupied, Flore, notwithstanding her companion's counsel, had been unable to control her rage; without knowing whether she was seconding or interfering with Max's plans, she broke out against the poor old bachelor. When Jean-Jacques incurred his nurse's displeasure, he found himself suddenly bereft of all the little cares and vulgar petting which were the joy of his life. In short, Flore put her master in disgrace. No more little affectionate words with which she was wont to grace her conversation, in various tones, with more or less tender glances—my puss, my chicken, my good old dog, my spoilt boy. No more familiar *tu*. A *vous*, short and cold, and ironically respectful, would pierce the unhappy man's heart like a knife. This *vous* was a declaration of war.

Then, instead of helping him to dress, giving him his things, anticipating his wishes, looking at him with the

sort of admiration women know how to convey—and the broader it is, the more gratifying—saying, 'You are as fresh as a rose! Come, you look wonderfully well! How fine you are, old man!'—instead of entertaining him while he dressed with the fun and follies that amused him, Flore left him to manage for himself. If he called her, she would answer from the bottom of the stairs—

'Well, I can't do two things at once—get your breakfast and wait on you in your room. Aren't you old enough to dress yourself?'

'Good God! How have I offended her?' the old fellow wondered, on receiving one of these rebuffs, when he called for some hot water to shave himself.

'Védie, take up some hot water to Monsieur,' cried Flore.

'Védie?' said the poor man, bewildered by his dread of the wrath impending over him. 'Védie, what is the matter with Madame this morning?'

Flore insisted on being called Madame by her master, by Védie, Kouski, and Max.

'She has heard something seemingly not much to your credit,' replied Védie, putting on a very pathetic air. 'You are very foolish, Monsieur. There, I am but a poor servant, and you may tell me not to be poking my nose into your concerns; but you may hunt through all the women in the world, like the King in Holy Writ, and you will never find her like. You ought to kiss the place where she has set her foot. . . . I tell you, if you vex her, it will be enough to break your own heart! And there really were tears in her eyes.'

Védie left the poor man quite annihilated; he sank into a chair, gazing into space like a man melancholy mad, and forgot to shave himself. These alternations of hot and cold affected the poor feeble creature, who lived only through his hold on love, like the deadly chill produced by a sudden passage from tropical heat to polar

cold. They were moral pleurisies which exhausted him like so many illnesses. Flore only in the whole world could act upon him so, for to her alone he was as kind as he was silly.

'What! You have not shaved yet?' said she, opening the door. She made Père Rouget start violently; from being pale and limp, he suddenly turned red for a moment, but dared not resent this attack.

'Your breakfast is waiting. But you may go down in your dressing-gown and slippers—you will breakfast by yourself.'

And she vanished without waiting for a reply. To make the poor man breakfast alone was one of the punishments which most deeply distressed him; he liked to talk while he was eating. As he reached the bottom of the stairs, Rouget was seized with a fit of coughing, for excitement had stirred his rheum.

'Oh yes, you may cough!' said Flore in the kitchen, not caring whether her master heard her or no. 'My word! the old wretch is strong enough to weather it without any one troubling theirselves about him! If he ever coughs his soul up, it won't be in our time.'

Such were the amenities with which la Rabouilleuse favoured Rouget in her fits of rage. The poor man sat down in deep dejection at a corner of the table in the middle of the room, looking at his old furniture and old pictures with a desolate air.

'You might have put on a neck-tie!' said Flore, coming in. 'Do you think a neck like yours is pretty to see—redder and more wrinkled than a turkey-cock's.'

'But what have I done?' he asked, raising his pale green eyes full of tears, and confronting Flore's cold look.

'What have you done?' she echoed. 'And you don't know? What a hypocrite! Why, your sister Agathe—who is as much your sister as I am sister to the Tower of Issoudun, if you can believe your father, and who is

nothing on earth to you—is coming from Paris with her son, that wretched tu'penny painter, and they're coming to see you——'

'My sister and nephews are coming to Issoudun?' said he, quite bewildered.

'Oh yes; you may pretend to be astonished, to make me believe that you did not write to them to come! That is a very thin trick. Don't be afraid, we won't interfere with your Paris friends, for we shall have shaken the dust off our feet before they set theirs within these walls! Max and I shall be gone never to return! As to your will—I will tear it in four quarters under your nose, under your beard, do you hear? You may leave your goods to your family, as we are not your family. After that you will see whether you are loved, for your own sake, by people who have not seen you for thirty years, or have never seen you at all! Your sister will not fill my place—a double-distilled bigot!'

'If that is all, my pretty Flore,' said the old man, 'I shall see neither my sister nor my nephews. I swear to you solemnly that this is the first word I have heard of their arrival, and it is a got-up thing arranged by Madame Hochon, the old bigot——!'

Max, who had heard Père Rouget's reply, suddenly came in, saying in a hectoring tone, 'What is the matter?'

'My good Max,' the old man went on, only too glad to purchase the Major's adhesion, for, by agreement with Flore, he was always to take Rouget's part, 'I swear to you, by all that is sacred, that I have only this instant heard the news. I never wrote to my sister; my father made me promise to leave her nothing, to give it rather to the Church—in short, I refuse to see either my sister Agathe or her sons.'

'Your father was wrong, my dear Jean-Jacques, and Madame is yet more wrong,' replied Max. 'Your father had his own reasons—he is dead, his hatred ought to die

with him. Your sister is your sister, your nephews are your nephews. You owe it to yourself to receive them cordially, and you owe it to us too. What would be said in Issoudun? Sss—thunder! I have enough on my shoulders; the only thing wanting is to give rise to a report that we keep you shut up, that you are not a free agent, that we have incensed you against your heirs, that we are trying to possess ourselves of your fortune. . . . The Devil may take me if I don't desert from the service at the very next calumny; one is quite enough!—Let us have breakfast.'

Flore, as meek as a mouse, helped Védie to lay the table. Rouget, filled with admiration for Max, took him by both hands, led him into a window bay, and said to him in an undertone—

'Ah, Max, if I had a son, I should not love him so well as I love you. Flore was right in saying that you two are my family. . . . You have a sense of honour, Max, and all you have said is very right——'

'You ought to entertain your sister and your nephew,' said Max, interrupting him, 'but ought not to alter your will; thus you will satisfy your father and everybody else.'

'Come, my little dears!' cried Flore, in cheerful tones, 'the salmis will be cold. There, old boy, there is a wing for you,' she said, smiling on Jean-Jacques.

At this speech the old fellow's long face lost its cadaverous tints, a treacly smile played on his flabby lips; but he coughed again, for the joy of being received again into favour excited him as greatly as being in disgrace. Flore sprang up, snatched a little cashmere shawl off her shoulders, and wrapped it round the old man's throat as a comforter, saying—

'It is silly to upset yourself so over trifles. Here, foolish old boy, that will do you good—it has been next my heart——'

'What a good soul!' said Rouget to Max, while Flore

went off for a black velvet cap to cover the old fellow's almost bald head.

'As good as she is handsome,' replied Max; 'but a little hasty, like all those who carry their heart in their hand.'

The reader may feel inclined to find fault with the crudities of this picture, and to think that the displays of la Rabouilleuse's temper are marked by some truths which the painter should leave in the shade? Well; this scene, a hundred times repeated with horrible variations, is in all its coarse and repulsive veraciousness the type of that which every woman will play, on whatever rung of the social ladder she may stand, if any kind of self-interest has diverted her from the path of obedience, and she has seized the reins of power. To women as to great politicians—the end justifies any means. Between Flore Brazier and a duchess, between the duchess and the richest tradesman's wife, between the tradesman's wife and the most splendidly kept woman, there are no differences but those due to education and to the atmosphere in which they live. A fine lady's sulks take the place of Flore's violence; in every rank bitter taunts, witty sarcasm, cold disdain, hypocritical whining, affected quarrels, are quite as successful as the low abuse of this Madame Everard of Issoudun.

Max told the story of Fario with so much drollery that he made the old fellow laugh. Védie and Kouski, who had come up to listen to the tale, exploded in the passage. As for Flore, she laughed hysterically. After breakfast, while Jean-Jacques was reading the papers—for they now subscribed to the *Constitutionnel* and the *Pandore*—Max took Flore up to his room.

'Are you certain,' said he, 'that he has never made another will since he named you as his legatee?'

'He has no writing things,' said she.

'He may have dictated one to some notary,' said Max. 'If he has not done so, we must be prepared for the

contingency. So receive the Bridaus as well as possible; but meanwhile we must try, as soon as we can, to realise all the money out on mortgage. Our notaries will be only too glad to effect the transfers; that is what they eat and drink by. State securities are going up every day; we are to conquer Spain and deliver Ferdinand VII. from his Cortès, so next year they may perhaps be above par. So it will be a good stroke of business to invest the old man's seven hundred and fifty thousand francs in the funds at 89. Only try and get them put into your name. It will always be something saved from the fire.'

'A capital idea,' said Flore.

'And as on eight hundred and ninety thousand francs he will draw fifty thousand francs a year, you must get him to borrow a hundred and forty thousand francs for two years, to be repaid in two instalments. Thus in two years we shall be drawing a hundred thousand francs from Paris and ninety thousand here, so we risk nothing.'

'Without you, my splendid Max, what would have become of us!' said she.

'Oh, to-morrow evening, at la Cognette's, after I have seen this Paris couple, I will find some means of making the Hochons themselves see them off the premises.'

'Oh, you are so clever! You are an angel, a love of a man!'

The Place Saint-Jean is situated half-way down a street called la Grande Narette in the upper part, and la Petite Narette below. In le Berry the word Narette means the same sort of highway as the Genoese *Salita*, a street built on a steep slope. Between the Place Saint-Jean and the Vilatte gate, the Narette is excessively steep. Old Monsieur Hochon's house is opposite to that where lived Jean-Jacques Rouget. What was going on at Père Rouget's could often be seen out of the drawing-

room window where Madame Hochon sat, and *vice versâ* when the curtains were undrawn or the doors left open.

Hochon's house is so much like Rouget's that they were, no doubt, built by the same architect. Hochon, long ago the collector of taxes at Selles, was born at Issoudun, and returned thither to marry the sister of the sub-delegate, the gallant Lousteau, exchanging his post at Selles for a similar one at Issoudun. He had retired before 1787, and so escaped the storms of the Revolution, while fully supporting its principles, like all honest men who shout on the winning side. It was not for nothing that Monsieur Hochon had a reputation for avarice. But would it not be mere vain repetition to describe him? One of the miserly acts, which made him famous, will, no doubt, be enough to paint Monsieur Hochon at full length.

At the time of his daughter's marriage to a Borniche —she was since dead—it was necessary to give a dinner to the Borniche family. The bridegroom, who expected to inherit a fine fortune, died soon after of grief at having failed in business, and yet more at his father's and mother's refusal to help him. These old Borniches were still living, delighted to have seen Monsieur Hochon take the guardianship of his grandchildren on account of his daughter's settlement, which he had succeeded in saving.

On the day when the marriage contract was to be signed, all the relations of both families had assembled in the drawing-room—the Hochons on one side, and the Borniches on the other, all in their Sunday best. In the midst of reading the contract, very solemnly performed by young Héron the notary, the cook came in and asked Monsieur Hochon for some pack-thread to truss the turkey—an important item in the bill of fare. The old tax-collector pulled out of the depths of his coat-pocket an end of string, which had, no doubt, tied up some parcel, and gave it to her; but before the woman had

reached the door, he called out, 'Gritte, let me have it back!' Gritte is a local abbreviation of Marguerite.

This will enable you to understand Monsieur Hochon, and the joke perpetrated by the town on the name of the family, consisting of the father, mother, and three children—*les cinq cochons*, the five pigs.

As years went by old Hochon became more and more niggardly and careful, and he was now eighty-five years of age. He was one of those who will stoop in the street, in the midst of an animated conversation, to pick up a pin, saying, 'That is a woman's wage!' and stick it into his coat cuff. He complained bitterly of the inferior quality of cloth nowadays, remarking that his coat had lasted only ten years. Tall, lean, and bony, with a yellow complexion, speaking little, reading little, never fatiguing himself, as ceremonious as an Oriental, he maintained a rule of strict sobriety in his household, doling out food and drink to his fairly numerous family, consisting of his wife *née* Lousteau, of his grandson Baruch and granddaughter Adolphine, the heirs of the old Borniches, and of his other grandson, François Hochon.

His eldest son, caught for the army in 1813 by the levy of men of respectable birth who escaped the conscription, and who were enrolled under the name of guards of honour, was killed at the battle of Hanau. The heir-presumptive had married, very young, a rich woman, hoping thus to evade any call to arms; but then he ran through all his money, foreseeing the end. His wife, who followed the French army at a distance, died at Strasbourg in 1814, leaving debts which old Hochon would not pay, quoting to the creditors the axiom of a past code, 'Women are minors.'

So folks could still say *les cinq Hochons*, since the household consisted of three grandchildren and two grandparents; and the jest still survived, for in the country no jest grows too stale. Gritte, now sixty years old, managed all the work of the house.

The house, though spacious, was scantily furnished. However, Madame Bridau could be very decently lodged in two rooms on the second floor. Old Hochon now repented of having kept two beds in these rooms, and belonging to each an old armchair in unvarnished wood, with a worsted-work seat, and a walnut wood table, on which stood a wide-mouthed water jug in a basin edged with blue. The old man kept his apples and winter pears, his quinces and medlars, on straw in these two rooms, where the rats and mice had a high time, and there was a strong flavour of fruit and mice. Madame Hochon had everything cleaned; the paper, where it had fallen from the walls, was stuck on again with wafers; she furnished the windows with muslin blinds cut out of some old skirts of her own. Then, when her husband refused to buy two little list rugs, she placed her own bedside rug for her little Agathe, talking of this mother of past seven-and-forty as 'Poor child!'

Madame Hochon borrowed two bed-tables from the Borniches, and most daringly hired from a second-hand shop two old chests of drawers with brass handles. She possessed two pairs of candlesticks, made of some scarce wood by her father, who had had a passion for turning. From 1770 to 1780 it had been the fashion among rich people to learn a trade; and Monsieur Lousteau the elder, head commissioner of subsidies, was a turner, as Louis XVI. was a locksmith. These candlesticks were decorated with rings in briar-root, peach, and apricot wood. Madame Hochon risked these precious relics!

All these preparations and this great sacrifice added to Monsieur Hochon's serious mien; he did not yet believe that the Bridaus would come.

On the very morning of the day made famous by the trick played on Fario, Madame Hochon said to her husband after breakfast—

'I hope, Hochon, that you will make Madame Bridau, my goddaughter, properly welcome.' Then, after assur-

ing herself that her grandchildren had left the room, she added: 'I am mistress of my own fortune; do not compel me to indemnify Agathe by my will for an unpleasant reception.'

'And do you suppose, Madame,' said Hochon gently, 'that at my age I do not know how to behave with decent civility.'

'You know very well what I mean, old fox! Be kind to our guests, and remember how truly I love Agathe——'

'Yes, and you truly loved Maxence Gilet, who is going to swallow whole the fortune that ought to be your Agathe's. Ah! you cherished a serpent in your bosom then!—After all, the Rougets' money was fated to belong to some Lousteau or another.'

Having made this allusion to the supposed parentage of Agathe and of Max, Hochon was about to leave the room; but old Madame Hochon, still slender and upright, wearing a mob cap with bows, and her hair powdered, with a shot-silk petticoat, tight sleeves, and high-heeled slippers, set her snuff-box down on her little table, and said—

'Really, Monsieur Hochon, how can a clever man like you repeat the nonsense which, unluckily, destroyed my poor friend's peace of mind, and cost my poor god-daughter her share of her father's fortune? Max Gilet is not my brother's son, and I often advised him to save the money he spent on him. And you know as well as I do that Madame Rouget was virtue itself——'

'Well, the daughter is worthy of her mother, for she seems to me a great goose. After losing all her money, she brought up her sons so well that one of them is in prison awaiting his trial before the supreme court for a conspiracy à la Berton. As to the other—worse and worse! he is a painter.—If your protégés remain here till they have extracted that idiot Rouget from the clutches of la Rabouilleuse and Gilet, we shall get through more than one bushel of salt with them.'

'That will do, Monsieur Hochon; but you might wish them success!'

Monsieur Hochon took up his hat and his ivory-handled cane, and went out, amazed by this alarming speech, for he had not supposed his wife to be so determined. Madame Hochon, on her part, took her prayer-book to read the order of service, her great age hindering her from going to mass every morning. It was with difficulty that she got to church on Sundays and high festivals. Since receiving Agathe's reply she had added to her regular prayers a special intercession, beseeching God to open the eyes of Jean-Jacques Rouget, to bless Agathe, and to grant success to the undertaking to which she had been driven.

Concealing the fact from her two grandsons, whom she regarded as *parpaillots* (renegades), she had requested the curé to say masses for nine days, attended by her granddaughter Adolphine Borniche, who put up her grandmother's prayers in the church as her proxy.

Adolphine, now eighteen, having stitched by her grandmother's side for seven years, in this chill home of methodical and melancholy regularity, was all the more ready to perform the *neuvaine*, because she hoped to inspire some tender feeling in Joseph Bridau, the painter so little understood by Monsieur Hochon, and in whom she took a keen interest, were it only on account of the monstrous ideas her grandfather attributed to the young Paris artist.

Old people, wise people, the magnates of the town, and fathers of families, all approved of Madance Hochon's conduct; and their good wishes for her goddaughter and for Agathe's sons were reinforced by the secret contempt they had long felt for the proceedings of Maxence Gilet. So the advent of Père Rouget's sister and nephew gave rise to two factions in Issoudun: that of the older and upper citizen class, who could only watch events and hope for the best without helping matters; and that of

the Knights of Idlesse and Max's partisans, who were, unfortunately, capable of doing much mischief to undermine the Parisians.

On this day, then, Agathe and Joseph got out of the coach at the office of the Messageries, Place Misère, at three in the afternoon. Though tired, Madame Bridau felt young again at the sight of her native town, where at every step she found some reminiscence and impression of her girlhood. In the state of mind prevailing at Issoudun the arrival of the Parisians was known all over the town within ten minutes.

Madame Hochon appeared at the front gate to receive her goddaughter, and kissed her as if she had been a child of her own. After seventy-two years of a life as empty as it was monotonous, with nothing to look back upon but the coffins of her three children, all dying in misfortune, she had cultivated a sort of artificial motherhood for the girl who, as she expressed it, had for sixteen years lived in her pocket. In the gloom of a provincial life she had cherished this old regard, this child's life, and all its memories, just as if Agathe were still with her, and she took a passionate interest in all that concerned the Bridaus.

Agathe was led in triumph into the drawing-room, where worthy Monsieur Hochon stood as cold as a raked-out oven.

'Here is Monsieur Hochon; how do you think he is looking?'

'Why, exactly as he did when I left him,' said Agathe.'

'Ah, it is evident you have come from Paris, you pay compliments,' said the old man.

The family were introduced: first, little Baruch Borniche, a tall youth of two-and-twenty; then little François Hochon, now twenty-four; and lastly, little Adolphine, who blushed, and did not know what to do

with her hands, and especially with her eyes, for she did not wish to appear to stare at Joseph Bridau, who was anxiously examined by the two lads and by old Hochon, but from different points of view. The miser was reflecting, 'He must have just come out of the hospital; he will eat like a fever-patient.'

The two young men were saying to themselves, 'What a brigand! What a head! We shall have our hands full!'

'Here is my son the painter, my good Joseph,' said Agathe finally, introducing the artist.

There was a little sigh in the emphasis on the word 'good,' which betrayed Agathe's heart; she was thinking of the prisoner at the Luxembourg.

'He looks ill,' cried Madame Hochon; 'he is not like you——'

'No, Madame,' said Joseph, with the rough simplicity of an artist, 'I am like my father, only uglier!'

Madame Hochon pressed Agathe's hand, which she was holding, and gave her a look. That grasp, that glance were meant to convey—

'Ah, my child, I quite understand your preferring that scapegrace Philippe.'

'I never saw your father, my dear boy,' replied Madame Hochon aloud; 'but that you are your mother's son is enough to make me love you. Besides, you have talent, from what the late Madame Descoings used to write to me; she was the only person to give me any news of you in these latter times.'

'Talent?' said the artist; 'no, not yet; but with time and perseverance I may some day win both glory and fortune.'

'By painting?' said Monsieur Hochon, with deep irony.

'Come, Adolphine,' said Madame Hochon, 'go and see about getting the dinner served.'

'Mother,' said Joseph, 'I will go and carry up our trunks, which have just come.'

'Hochon, will you show Monsieur Bridau the rooms,' said the grandmother to François.

As dinner was not till four, and it was now but half-past three, Baruch went round the town giving news of the Bridaus' arrival, describing Agathe's dress, and, above all, Joseph, whose hollow cheeks and sickly, strongly-marked features were like the ideal portrait of a brigand. In every house that day Joseph was the sole subject of conversation.

'Old Rouget's sister must have met an ape somewhere before her son was born; he is just like a monkey.'—'He has a face like a brigand, and eyes like a basilisk.'—'They say he is extraordinary to behold, quite alarming.'—'All Paris artists are the same.'—'They are as spiteful as cunning asses, and as vicious as apes.'—'It is in the nature of their calling.'—'I have just seen Monsieur Beaussier, who says he would not for worlds meet him at night in a wood. He saw him in the diligence.'—'He has hollows in his face like a horse, and he waves his arms like a madman.'—'That fellow is capable of any crime; it is his fault, perhaps, that his brother, who was a fine handsome man, has gone to the bad. Poor Madame Bridau, she does not look very happy with him. Suppose we take advantage of his being here to have our likenesses drawn?'

The result of these opinions, sown broadcast in the town as if by the winds, was a devouring curiosity. All who had a right to call on the Hochons promised themselves that they would do so that evening, to inspect the Parisians. The arrival of these two persons in a stagnant town like Issoudun was as startling as the fall of the Log among the Frogs.

After placing his mother's luggage and his own in the two attic rooms, and looking round them, Joseph studied the silent house, where the stairs, walls, and panels, bare of adornment, shed a chill, and there was not a thing beyond what was strictly necessary. But when, on going

downstairs, he found Monsieur Hochon himself cutting a slice of bread for each person, he understood for the first time Molière's *Harpagon.*

'We should have done better at the inn,' thought he.

The dinner confirmed his apprehensions. After a soup, so thin that quantity was evidently preferred to quality, a dish of bouilli was served—fresh-boiled beef—triumphantly wreathed with parsley. The vegetables cooked with it, served in a separate dish, were part of the bill of fare. The meat crowned the table, and was flanked by three other dishes; hard eggs on sorrel opposite the vegetables, and a salad, ready dressed with nut-oil, opposite little cups of custard flavoured with burnt oats as a substitute for vanilla—as much like vanilla as chicory is like Mocha. Butter, and radishes on little plates at the opposite ends, black radishes and gherkins, completed the display, which Madame Hochon highly approved. The good old lady nodded at her husband, as a hostess happy to see that, at any rate for the first day, he had done things in style. The old man responded with a look and a shrug, easily interpreted to mean—

'You see what recklessness you lead me into!'

As soon as the bouilli had been dissected by Monsieur Hochon into slices as thin as the sole of your slipper, it was removed to make way for three pigeons. The wine was of the vintage of 1811. At a hint from her grandmother, Adolphine had graced each end of the table with a bunch of flowers.

'Well, make the best of a bad job!' thought the artist, as he looked at the table. And he began to eat like a man who had breakfasted at Vierzon at six in the morning, off an execrable cup of coffee.

When Joseph had eaten his bread and asked for some more, Monsieur Hochon rose, slowly felt for a key in the depths of his coat-pocket, opened a cupboard behind him, flourished the stump of a twelve-pound loaf, ceremoniously cut off another slice, which he divided in two,

put it on a plate, and passed the plate across the table to the young painter, with the silence and composure of an old soldier, who says to himself at the beginning of a battle, 'Well, I may be dead by to-night.'

Joseph took half the slice, and understood that he must never again ask for more bread. No member of the family was surprised at this scene, which to Joseph seemed so preposterous.

The conversation went on. Agathe heard that the house she was born in, her father's house before he had inherited that of the Descoings, had been bought by the Borniches, and she expressed a wish to see it again.

'The Borniches will call this evening, no doubt,' said her godmother. 'All the town will come to inspect you,' she added to Joseph, 'and they will ask you to their houses.'

For dessert the maid brought in the famous soft cheeses of Touraine and le Berry, made of goats' milk, which so exactly reproduce, in a sort of niello, the veining of the vine-leaves on which they are served, that engraving might very well have been invented in Touraine. On each side of the little cheeses Gritte ceremoniously served some walnuts and some rocky biscuits.

'Come, Gritte, bring us some fruit,' said Madame Hochon.

'Madame, there is no rotten fruit left,' replied Gritte.

Joseph shouted with laughter, as if he had been in his studio with his own companions, for he understood at once that the precaution of beginning first on damaged fruit had degenerated into a habit.

'Oh, we can eat it all the same!' said he, with the dash of spirit of a man who feels that he must speak.

'Pray go for some, Monsieur Hochon,' said the old lady.

Monsieur Hochon, much annoyed by the artist's remark, fetched some small peaches, some pears, and late plums.

'Adolphine, go and cut some grapes,' said Madame Hochon to her granddaughter.

Joseph looked at the two young men with an expression that seemed to say, 'And is it to such a diet as this that you owe your blooming appearance?'

Baruch understood this keen glance, and could not help smiling, for his cousin Hochon and he had displayed moderate appetites. The food at home was a matter of indifference to men who supped three times a week at la Cognette's. And just before dinner, Baruch had had notice that the Grand Master of the Order had summoned a full meeting at midnight to have a splendid supper, as he required their co-operation.

This banquet of welcome offered to his guests by old Hochon explains how necessary these midnight festivities were for the maintenance of these two great fellows, who had fine appetites, and who never missed one.

'We will have some liqueurs in the drawing-room,' said Madame Hochon, rising, and signing to Joseph to give her his arm. They went out first, and she was able to say to the painter, 'Well, my poor boy, your dinner will not give you an indigestion; but I had great difficulty in procuring it for you! You will find lenten fare here; just enough to eat to keep you alive, and that is all. So just make the best of it.'

The frank simplicity of the old lady, thus pronouncing judgment on her own house, pleased the painter.

'I shall have lived fifty years with that old man without ever having heard twenty crowns jingle in my purse. Oh, if it were not for the hope of saving your fortune, I would never have invited your mother and you to stay in my prison!'

'But how is it that you are still alive?' said the painter artlessly, with the light-heartedness that never deserts a French artist.

'Ah, indeed!' said she. 'I pray.'

Joseph felt a thrill as he heard these words, which gave

the old woman such dignity in his eyes that he drew back two or three steps to look in her face; he saw it radiant, full of such tender serenity, that he said to her—

'I will paint your portrait——'

'No, no,' said she. 'I have hated life on earth too much to wish to remain on it in a picture.'

As she spoke the sad words in a light tone, she took from a cupboard a flask containing black-currant brandy, a household liqueur prepared by herself, for she had had the recipe from the famous Sisterhood who also created the Issoudun cakes, one of the greatest achievements of French confectionery, which no *chef*, cook, pastry-cook, or confectioner has ever been able to imitate. Monsieur de Rivière, the Ambassador to Constantinople, ordered immense numbers every year for Mahmoud's seraglio. Adolphine held a small lacquer tray full of little old-fashioned glasses with an engraved pattern and a gilt rim; as her grandmother filled them, she carried them round.

'Glasses round.—Father will have some!' cried Agathe gaily, reminded of her young days by this time-honoured ceremony.

'Hochon will go presently to his club to read the papers; we shall have a little time to ourselves,' said the old lady in a low voice.

In fact, ten minutes later, the three women and Joseph were left to themselves in the drawing-room. Its floor was never polished, only swept, while the tapestried panels, in oak frames, with deep ogees and mouldings, and all the simple heavy furniture, stood before Madame Bridau exactly as she had left them. The Monarchy, the Revolution, the Empire, and the Restoration, respecters of few things, had respected this room, where their splendours and disasters had left not a trace.

'Ah, godmother, my life has been cruelly storm-tossed in comparison with yours!' exclaimed Madame Bridau, surprised to see even a canary bird, which she had known

alive, stuffed and standing on the chimney-shelf between the old clock and the old brass branched candlesticks and silver taper-stands.

'My child,' replied the old lady, 'storms are in the heart. The greater and the more needed is our resignation, the greater must our inmost struggles be.—But we will not talk of me, but of your affairs. You are indeed exactly opposite the foe,' she went on, pointing to the windows of old Rouget's house.

'They are sitting down to dinner,' remarked Adolphine.

The young girl, almost a recluse, was constantly looking out of window, hoping to catch some light shed by chance on the enormities ascribed to Maxence Gilet, to la Rabouilleuse, and to Jean-Jacques, of which a hint now and again reached her ears when she was sent away while they were discussed. The old lady now told her granddaughter to leave her with Monsieur and Madame Bridau till the first visitor should come.

'For I know my Issoudun,' said she, looking at the two Parisians; 'we shall have ten or twelve batches of inquisitive callers this evening.'

Madame Hochon had hardly had time to give them the events and particulars concerning the extraordinary influence exerted over Jean-Jacques Rouget by la Rabouilleuse and Maxence Gilet—not with the synthetic brevity with which they have here been narrated, but with the addition of a thousand comments, descriptions, and hypotheses lent to them by good and evil tongues in the town—when Adolphine announced the approach of the Borniches, the Beaussiers, the Lousteau-Prangins, the Fichets, the Goddet-Héraus, fourteen persons in all, who loomed in the distance.

'So, you see, my dear child,' said the old lady in conclusion, 'that it will be no small matter to drag this fortune out of the wolf's mouth——'

'It seems to me so difficult, with such a scoundrel as

you have described, and a slut like that young witch, that it must be impossible,' said Joseph. 'We should have to remain at Issoudun a year at least to combat their influence and undo their power over my uncle.—No fortune is worth so much vexation, to say nothing of having to stoop to a thousand dishonourable tricks. My mother has but a fortnight's leave of absence; her appointment is a certainty, and she must not risk losing it. In the month of October I have some important work to do which Schinner has secured for me in a nobleman's house. And to me, Madame, you see, fortune lies in my paint-brushes.'

This speech was received with profound amazement. Madame Hochon, though relatively superior to the place she lived in, did not believe in painting. She looked at her goddaughter, and again grasped her hand.

'This Maxence is a second edition of Philippe,' said Joseph in his mother's ear; 'but with more policy, more style than Philippe has.'—'Well, Madame,' he added aloud, 'we shall not long put Monsieur Hochon out of his way by staying here.'

'Oh, you are young; you know nothing of the world,' said the old lady. 'In a fortnight, with a little political manœuvring, you may do something. Listen to my advice, and act as I may direct you.'

'Oh, very gladly!' cried Joseph. 'I am conscious of ineffable incapacity in domestic tactics; and I am sure I do not know what Desroches himself would advise us to do if, for instance, my uncle refuses to see us to-morrow.'

Mesdames Borniche, Goddet-Hérau, Beaussier, Lousteau-Prangin, and Fichet, graced by their husbands, now came in.

After the usual greetings, and when the fourteen persons had found seats, Madame Hochon could not avoid introducing to them her goddaughter Agathe and Joseph Bridau. Joseph remained on a sofa, and gave himself up to a covert study of the sixty faces which

from half-past five till nine came to sit to him gratis, as he said to his mother. And Joseph's attitude throughout this evening in regard to the patricians of Issoudun did nothing to alter the views of the little town in regard to him. Every one left chilled by his ironical gaze, uncomfortable under his smile, or alarmed by his face, sinister, no doubt, to people who could not discern the eccentricity of genius.

At ten o'clock, when everybody went to bed, the old lady detained her goddaughter in her room till midnight. Then, knowing that they were alone, the two women, while telling each other the troubles of their lives, made an exchange of suffering. As she measured the vastness of the solitude in which all the powers of a beautiful soul had been spent unrecognised, as she heard the last utterances of an intelligence that had missed its opportunities, as she learnt the sorrows of a heart so essentially generous and charitable, but whose generosity and charity had never had full play, Agathe no longer regarded herself as the more unfortunate of the two, as she perceived how much mitigation and minor happiness her Paris life had afforded in the midst of the discipline appointed her by God.

'You who are so pious, godmother, tell me my faults,' said she. 'Tell me what it is that God is punishing me for.'

'He prepares us, my child,' replied the old lady as midnight struck.

At midnight the Knights of Idlesse were making their way, one by one, like shades, to meet under the trees of the Boulevard Baron, and walked to and fro, talking in low whispers.

'What is up?' was the first question of each new comer.

'I fancy,' said François, 'that all Max intends is to give us a feed.'

'No. Matters are looking awkward for him and la Rabouilleuse. He has concocted some plot against these Parisians no doubt——'

'It would be good fun to pack them off again.'

'My grandfather,' said Baruch, 'is in a fright already at having two more mouths to fill, and he would jump at any excuse——'

'Well, Knights!' cried Max in a low voice as he came up, 'why are you gazing at the stars? They will not distil kirsch on our heads. To la Cognette's! To la Cognette's!'

'To la Cognette's!'

The shout as of one voice produced a fearful din, that swept across the little town like the hue of soldiers rushing on an assault; then utter silence fell. Next morning more than one person would say to his neighbour: 'Did you hear that fearful yell last night at about one o'clock? I thought there was a fire somewhere.'

A supper worthy of la Cognette cheered the eyes of the two-and-twenty guests, for the Order was present in all its numbers. At two in the morning, when they were beginning to *siroter*, a word of their own peculiar slang, fairly descriptive of the art of drinking in sips and slowly tasting the wine, Max addressed the meeting:—

'My dear boys, this morning, in consequence of the never-to-be-forgotten trick we played with Fario's cart, your Grand Master was so grossly insulted on a point of honour by that base corn-dealer, and a Spaniard to boot —Ah, those hulks!—that I am determined to let that miscreant feel the whole weight of my vengeance, within the strict limits of our sports. After considering the matter all day, I have hit on a plan for playing him a capital trick, a trick that is enough to drive him mad. While avenging the Order attacked in my person, we may feed certain animals worshipped by the Egyptians, little beasts which are, after all, God's creatures though men persecute them unjustly. Good comes of evil, and

evil of good; such is the divine law! I require you each and all, under pain of your humble servant and Grand Master's displeasure, to procure, as secretly as possible, twenty rats, or if possible, lady rats expecting families by God's grace. You must collect your contingent within three days. If you can get more, the surplus will be acceptable. Keep these interesting rodents without food, for it is essential that the dear little beasts should be ravenously hungry. Observe, I include as rats, mice and field-mice. If we multiply twenty by twenty-two, we shall have more than four hundred accomplices, who, when turned out in the old church of the Capuchins, where Fario has stored all the seed-corn he has just laid in, will consume a certain quantity of it. But we must look sharp!—Fario is to deliver a large parcel of seeds in a week; now what I want is that my Spanish friend, who is travelling round for orders, should find a fearful waste.

'Gentlemen, the merit of this invention is not mine,' he went on, noting signs of general approbation. '"Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's." This is an imitation of Samson's foxes in the Bible. But Samson was an incendiary, and consequently not a philanthropist; while we, like the Brahmins, are the protectors of a persecuted race. Mademoiselle Flore Brazier has already set all her mouse-traps, and Kouski, my right hand, is hunting field-mice.—I have spoken.'

'I know,' said Goddet *junior*, 'where to get an animal as good as forty rats single-handed.'

'What?'

'A squirrel.'

'And I can contribute a small monkey who will eat corn till he bursts,' said a novice.

'No good!' said Max. 'It will be known where the beasts come from.'

'In the course of the night,' said young Beaussier,

'we might bring in one pigeon from the pigeon-house of each farm in the neighbourhood, by putting it through a hole made in the roof, and there soon would be thousands of pigeons.'

'Well, then, for a week Fario's corn-store is the order of the night,' said Gilet, smiling at the tall youth Beaussier *junior*. 'You know that they are astir early at Saint-Paterne. Mind no one is to go there without having put the soles of his list-shoes on hind part before. Our good knight Beaussier, the inventor of the pigeon trick, takes the command. For my part, I will take care to leave my mark on the grain. I leave it to you to be quarter-masters general to the forces of rats. If the shop-boy sleeps in the old church, his companions must make him drunk; and do it cleverly, so as to get him far away from the banquet to be provided for the rodents.

'And you say nothing about the Parisians?' asked Goddet.

'Oh!' said Max, 'they must be studied. At the same time, I will give my fine fowling-piece, that came to me from the Emperor, a first-class article from the Versailles factory—it is worth two thousand francs—to any one who will hit upon a plan for playing these Parisians some trick to get them into such bad odour with Monsieur and Madame Hochon that the old folks should pack them off, or that they should go of their own accord; without causing too much annoyance, however, to the ancestors of my good friends François and Baruch.'

'All right, I will think it over,' said young Goddet, who was passionately addicted to shooting.

'And if the inventor of the ploy does not want the gun, he may have my horse,' added Maxence.

Thenceforth twenty brains were vainly racked to concoct some plot against Agathe and her son, in conformity with this programme. But the devil alone, or some

chance, could succeed; the conditions of the case made it so difficult.

Next morning Agathe and Joseph came downstairs a minute before the second breakfast at ten o'clock. The meal called the first breakfast consisted of a cup of milk and a slice of bread and butter, eaten in bed, or on getting up.

While waiting for Madame Hochon, who, in spite of old age, carefully went through all the ceremonies employed in their toilet by the duchesses of Louis XV.'s reign, Joseph saw, on the threshold of the house opposite, Jean-Jacques Rouget standing squarely in the doorway. He, naturally, pointed him out to his mother, who could not recognise her brother, so little was he like what he had been when they parted.

'There is your brother,' said Adolphine, who had given her grandmother her arm.

'What an idiot!' cried Joseph.

Agathe clasped her hands and looked up to Heaven.

'What have they brought him to? Good Heavens! is that a man of fifty-seven?'

She wished to look at him attentively, and then saw Flore Brazier come up behind him, her hair dressed without a cap, and displaying, through the gauze of a kerchief trimmed with lace, snowy shoulders and a dazzling bosom; she was dressed as elaborately as a rich courtesan, wearing a tightly-fitting gown of grenadine—a silk stuff then very fashionable—with *gigot* sleeves, and magnificent bracelets on her wrists. A gold chain meandered over the bodice of la Rabouilleuse, who had brought Jean-Jacques his black silk cap that he might not catch cold—it was evidently a got-up scene.

'What a lovely woman!' cried Joseph. 'Of a rare kind, too! Made to be painted, as we say! What flesh-tints, what splendid colouring! What a skin, what curves, and what shoulders! She is a magnificent Caryatid! And a perfect model for a Titian's Venus!'

To Adolphine and Madame Hochon this might have been Greek; but Agathe, behind her son, made a sign to them as much as to say that she was accustomed to this jargon.

'You think a woman lovely who is robbing you of a fortune!' exclaimed Madame Hochon.

'That does not prevent her being a splendid model! Exactly full enough, without the hips or bust having become coarse——'

'My dear, you are not in your studio,' said Agathe. 'Adolphine is here——'

'To be sure, I beg pardon; but, really, all the way from Paris along the road I saw none but apes——'

'But my dear godmother,' said Agathe, 'how can I see my brother? For if that creature is with him——'

'Pooh!' said Joseph. 'I will go to see him. For, indeed, I don't think him quite such an idiot if he has wit enough to gladden his eyes with a Venus worthy of Titian.'

'If he were not an idiot,' said Monsieur Hochon, coming in, 'he would have married comfortably, have had a family, and you would have had no chance at all of his fortune. Some good comes out of evil.'

'That is a good idea of your son's; he can go first to call on his uncle,' said Madame Hochon. 'He will give him to understand that if you go he must receive you alone.'

'And so affront Mademoiselle Brazier?' said Monsieur Hochon. 'No, no, Madame. Put up with this grievance. If you do not get the fortune, try to secure a legacy.'

The Hochons were no match for Maxence Gilet. In the middle of breakfast the Pole arrived with a note from his master, Monsieur Rouget, addressed to his sister, Madame Bridau.

Here is the letter which Madame Hochon made her husband read:—

'My dear Sister,—

'I hear through strangers of your arrival at Issoudun. I can guess the reason for your preferring Monsieur and Madame Hochon's house to mine; but if you come to see me, you shall be received here as you ought to be. I should be the first to call on you but that my health compels me at present to keep the house. I offer you my affectionate respects. I should be delighted to meet your son, whom I shall hope to see at dinner with me to-day, for young men are less precise than women as to the company they meet. He will give me great pleasure by coming accompanied by Messieurs Baruch Borniche, and François Hochon.

'Your affectionate brother,

'J.-J. Rouget.'

'Say that we are at breakfast, that Madame Bridau will send an answer presently, and the gentlemen accept the invitation,' said Monsieur Hochon to the maid. And the old man laid his finger on his lip to impress silence on all the party.

When the house-door was shut, Monsieur Hochon, having no suspicion of the alliance between his grandsons and Maxence, shot one of his keenest glances at his wife and Agathe.

'He no more wrote that,' said he, 'than I am able to pay down twenty-five louis.—The soldier is our correspondent.'

'What does it all mean?' said Madame Hochon. 'Never mind, we will answer it. You, Monsieur,' she added, turning to the painter, 'will dine there, I hope; but if——'

The old lady stopped short at a look from her husband. Seeing the warmth of his wife's affection for Agathe, old Hochon feared lest she should leave her goddaughter some legacy in the event of her losing all the Rouget property. Though he was fifteen years the elder, the miser hoped

to survive her, and to see himself one day master of everything. This hope was his ruling idea. So Madame Hochon had rightly guessed that the way to extract some concessions from her husband was to threaten that she would make a will.

So Monsieur Hochon sided with his guests. The Rouget fortune, which hung in the balance, was in fact enormous; and his sense of social justice made him wish to see it in the hands of the natural heirs rather than grabbed by disreputable outsiders. Again, the sooner the business was settled, the sooner would he be rid of his visitors. Since the struggle, which till now had been only a scheme of his wife's, had actually begun between the rightful heirs and the unrighteous schemers, Monsieur Hochon's mind had waked up from the sleep induced by provincial life. Madame Hochon was quite agreeably surprised when, that very morning, she understood, from some kindly expression of old Hochon's with regard to her goddaughter, that this competent and wily auxiliary was on the side of the Bridaus.

By noon the combined talents of Monsieur and Madame Hochon, of Agathe and Joseph—a good deal surprised to find the two old people so careful in their choice of words—had brought to birth the following reply for the especial benefit of Flore and Maxence:—

'My dear Brother,—

'If I have waited thirty years without revisiting this town, or keeping up any intercourse with any one in it, not even with you, the fault lies not alone with the strange and false ideas my father had formed against me, but partly with the misfortunes and with the happiness of my life in Paris; for, though God made me a happy wife, He has sorely stricken me as a mother. You cannot but know that my son, your nephew Philippe, lies under a capital charge of treason in consequence of his devotion to the Emperor. Hence, you will not be

surprised to hear that a widow, compelled to earn her living by accepting a humble employment in a lottery office, should have come to seek consolation and substantial help from those who have known her from her birth.

'The profession taken up by the son who is with me is one of those which demand great talent, great sacrifices, and long study before leading to any success. Glory precedes fortune in this career. Is not this as much as to say that even if Joseph makes his name famous, he will still be poor?

'I, your sister, my dear Jean-Jacques, would have endured in silence the effects of our father's injustice, but forgive me as a mother for reminding you that you have two nephews—one who served on the Emperor's staff at the battle of Montereau, and fought with the Imperial Guard at Waterloo, and who is now in prison; the other who, from the age of thirteen, has been led by a vocation into a difficult though splendid career.

'So I thank you, my dear brother, with heartfelt warmth, for your letter, both on my own account and on Joseph's; he will certainly wait on you at your invitation. Ill health excuses everything, my dear Jean-Jacques; I will see you in your own house. A sister is always at home in her brother's house, whatever life he may choose to lead.

'Accept my affectionate regards,

'AGATHE ROUGET.'

'There, the battle has begun. When you go there,' said Monsieur Hochon, 'you can speak plainly to him about his nephews.'

The letter was delivered by Gritte, who returned in ten minutes to report to her superiors all she had been able to see or hear, as is the custom in the provinces.

'Madame,' said she, 'since last evening, all that part of the house that Madame had left——'

'Madame—who?' asked old Hochon.

'Oh, they call la Rabouilleuse Madame over there,' replied Gritte.

'She had left the drawing-room and everything that was about Monsieur Rouget in a dreadful state; but since yesterday the house is all to rights again, as it was before Monsieur Maxence came there. You could see yourself in everything. Védie told me that Kouski was out on horseback by six this morning; he came in about nine, bringing in provisions. Indeed, there is to be the best of dinners, a dinner fit for the Archbishop of Bourges. Little pans are standing in big pans, and everything in order in the kitchen. "I mean to treat my nephew handsomely," the old fellow said, and made them tell him all they were doing. The Rougets were highly flattered by the letter, it would seem; Madame came out to tell me so. Oh, she is dressed! Such a dress! I never saw anything handsomer! Madame has diamonds in her ears—two diamonds worth a thousand crowns a piece, Védie told me—and lace! and rings on her fingers, and bracelets good enough for a shrine, and a silk gown fit for an altar-front! And then says she to me: "Monsieur is delighted to think his sister is so ready and willing, and I hope she will allow us to entertain her as she deserves. And we look forward to her good opinion of us when she hears how welcome we make her son. And Monsieur is most impatient to see his nephew."—Madame had little black satin shoes and stockings! Oh, really wonderful. Like flowers on the silk, and holes like lace, and you see the pink flesh through. In short, she is up to the nines! With such a dear little apron in front of her, that Védie told me that apron alone cost two years of our wages——'

'Come, come, we must get ourselves up!' said the artist, smiling.

'Well, Monsieur Hochon, and what are you thinking about?' said the old lady, when Gritte had left the room.

Madame Hochon pointed to her husband sitting with his head in his hands, and his elbows on the arms of his chair, lost in thought.

'You have a Maître Bonin to deal with,' said the old man. 'You, young man, with your notions, are no match in a struggle with a scoundrel of such skill as Maxence. Whatever I may say, you are sure to make some blunder; but, at any rate, tell me this evening all you see, hear, and do. Go—and God be with you! Try to have a few minutes alone with your uncle. If, in spite of all you can do, you fail in that, it will throw some light on their scheme; but if you are alone with him for one instant—alone, without being overheard, mind you!—You must speak very plainly to him as to his position—which is not a becoming one—and plead your mother's cause.'

At four o'clock Joseph crossed the straits which divided the Hochons' house from the Rougets', the avenue of sickly lime-trees, two hundred feet long, and as wide as the Grande Narette. When the nephew appeared, Kouski, in freshly blacked boots, black trousers, white waistcoat, and black coat, led the way to announce him.

The table was ready laid in the sitting-room, and Joseph, who easily identified his uncle, went straight up to him and embraced him, bowing to Flore and Maxence.

'We have never met since I came into the world, my dear uncle,' said the painter gaily. 'But better late than never.'

'You are very welcome, my dear boy,' said the old man, looking at his nephew with a bewildered air.

'Madame,' said Joseph to Flore with an artist's enthusiasm, 'this morning I was envying my uncle the pleasure he enjoys of admiring you every day.'

'Is not she beautiful?' said the old man, his dull eyes almost sparkling.

'Beautiful enough to be a painter's model.'

'Nephew,' said the old man, his elbow being nudged by Flore, 'this is Monsieur Maxence Gilet, a man who served the Emperor, like your brother, in the Imperial Guard.'

Joseph rose and bowed.

'Your brother, I think, was a dragoon, and I was only a mud-crusher,' said Maxence.

'On horseback or on foot,' observed Flore, 'you risked your skin all the same.'

Joseph studied Max as narrowly as Max studied Joseph. Max was dressed like the young men of fashion of the day, for he had his clothes from Paris. A pair of sky-blue cloth trousers, very fully pleated, made the best of his feet by showing only the tips of his boots and his spurs. His waist was firmly held by a white waistcoat with fancy gold buttons, laced behind to serve as a belt; this waistcoat, buttoning to the throat, set off his broad chest, and his black satin stock obliged him to hold his head up like a soldier. His black coat was extremely well cut. A handsome gold chain hung from his waistcoat pocket, where a flat watch scarcely showed. He was playing with one of the patent watch-keys just invented by Breguet.

'He is a very good-looking fellow!' said Joseph to himself, admiring as an artist the face full of life, the appearance of strength, and the keen grey eyes inherited by Max from his gentleman father. 'My uncle must be a deadly old bore, and that handsome girl has sought compensation. It is a case of three in a boat, that is very clear.'

At this moment Baruch and François came in.

'You have not yet seen the Tower of Issoudun?' said Flore to Joseph. 'Well, if you like to take a little walk till dinner is ready, which will not be for an hour yet, we will show you the great curiosity of the town——'

'With pleasure,' said the artist, unable to discern the smallest objection.

While Flore was putting on her bonnet, her gloves, and her cashmere shawl, Joseph suddenly caught sight of the pictures, and started to his feet as if some enchanter had touched him with his wand.

'Ah, ha! so you have pictures, uncle?' said he, looking at the one that had struck him.

'Yes,' said the old fellow, 'they came to me from the Descoings, who, during the Revolution, bought up some of the pickings of the convents and churches of le Berry.'

But Joseph was not listening. He went from picture to picture.

'Magnificent!' he exclaimed. 'Why, what a fine thing! That man did not spoil canvas. Bless me, why, better and better; as we see them at Nicolet's——'

'There are seven or eight more, very large ones, in the loft, that were kept for the sake of the frames,' said Gilet.

'Let me see them,' cried the artist, and Maxence took him to the loft.

Joseph came down in raptures. Max said a word in la Rabouilleuse's ear, and she led the old man to the window; Joseph caught these words spoken in an undertone, but still so that he could hear them—

'Your nephew is a painter; you can do nothing with these pictures. Be good-natured, and give them to him.'

'It would seem,' said Rouget, leaning on Flore's arm, and coming to the spot where his nephew stood in ecstasies before an Albano,—'it would seem that you are a painter——'

'Only a smudger as yet,' said Joseph.

'What ever is that?' said Flore.

'A beginner,' said Joseph.

'Well,' said Jean-Jacques, 'if these pictures can be of any use to you in your business, I will give them to you. . . . But without the frames. The frames are gilt, and then they are quaint; I will put——'

'Why, of course, uncle,' cried Joseph, enchanted,

'you will put copies into them, which I will send you, and which shall be of the same size.'

'But that will take time, and you will want canvas and paints,' said Flore. 'It will cost you money. Come, Père Rouget, suppose you offer your nephew a hundred francs for each picture; there are twenty-seven here, and I think there are eleven more in the loft, which are enormous, and ought to cost double—say four thousand francs for the lot. Yes, your uncle may very well spend four thousand francs on the copies, since he is to keep the frames. You will have to get frames too, and they say the frames cost more than the pictures; there is gold on them. . . . I say, Monsieur,' Flore went on, shaking the old man's arm, 'listen, that is not dear: your nephew will charge you four thousand francs for quite new pictures in the place of your old ones. . . . It is a civil way of making him a present of the money,' said she in his ear. 'He does not strike me as being very flush——'

'Very well, nephew, I will pay you four thousand francs for the copies——'

'No, no,' said Joseph honestly. 'Four thousand francs and the pictures is too much; for the pictures, you see, are of value.'

'Why, accept it, booby,' said Flore, 'since he is your uncle . . .'

'Very well, I accept it,' said Joseph, quite bewildered, for he had recognised one picture as by Perugino.

So the artist looked quite gleeful as he went out, giving his arm to la Rabouilleuse, which perfectly suited Max's purpose. Neither Flore, nor Rouget, nor Max, nor any one at Issoudun had any idea of the value of the pictures, and the wily Max believed that he had purchased very cheaply Flore's triumph as she marched proudly arm in arm with her master's nephew, on the best possible terms with him, in the eyes of the astonished townsfolk. People came to their doors to see the victory

of la Rabouilleuse over the family. This astounding fact made the deep sensation on which Max had built his hopes. So when the uncle and nephew went in at about five, the talk in every household was of the perfect alliance between Flore and Max and Père Rouget's nephew. And the story of the gift of the pictures and the four thousand francs was all over the town already.

The dinner, to which Lousteau, one of the judges, and the Mayor of Issoudun, was invited, was really splendid; it was one of the country meals which last five hours. The finest wines gave spirit to the conversation. Over the dessert, at nine o'clock, the painter, seated between Flore and Max, opposite his uncle, was almost hail-fellow with the officer, whom he thought the best of good souls. At eleven o'clock Joseph went home, a little screwed. As to old Rouget, Kouski carried him to bed dead drunk; he had eaten like a travelling actor, and drunk like the sands of the desert.

'Well, now,' said Max, left alone with Flore, 'is not this better than sulking with them? The Bridaus are well received; they will get some little presents, and, loaded with favours, they can only sing our praises; they will go quietly away, and leave us quietly where we are. To-morrow morning Kouski and I between us will take out all those pictures, and send them over for the painter to see them when he wakes; we will put the frames in the loft, and have the room repapered with one of those varnished papers, with scenes on it from Télémaque, such as I saw at Monsieur Mouilleron's.

'Why, that will be ever so much prettier!' cried Flore.

Joseph did not wake till noon next day. From his bed he saw the pictures leaning one above another, having been brought in without his hearing anything. While he was examining them afresh, and recognising them as masterpieces, studying the handling of each master, or

finding their signatures, his mother went to thank her brother and to see him, urged to do so by old Hochon, who, knowing all the blunders committed by Joseph the evening before, despaired of the Bridaus' prospects.

'You have to deal with two very sharp customers. In all my life I never met with so sly a fox as that soldier. War is the making of these youths, it would seem. Joseph walked into the trap. He appeared arm in arm with la Rabouilleuse. They have shut his mouth, no doubt, with wine, some rubbishy pictures, and four thousand francs. Your artist has not cost Maxence dear.'

The cunning old man had laid down a line of conduct for his wife's goddaughter, instructing her to seem to agree with Maxence and cajole Flore, so as to become to some extent familiar with her, and obtain a few minutes' talk alone with her brother. Madame Bridau was very well received by Jean-Jacques, tutored by Flore. The old man was in bed, ill from the excesses of the previous evening. As Agathe could not attack him on serious questions at the very first moment, Max had thought it correct and handsome to leave the brother and sister to themselves. He had calculated judiciously. Poor Agathe found her brother so ill that she would not deprive him of Mademoiselle Brazier's attentions.

'Besides,' she said to the old man, 'I should wish to know the person to whom I am indebted for my brother's happiness.'

These words gave the poor fellow evident pleasure; he rang and sent for Madame Brazier. Flore, as may be supposed, was not far off. The female antagonists exchanged salutes. La Rabouilleuse displayed the most obsequious care, the tenderest attentions; she thought Monsieur's head was too low, and rearranged the pillows; she was like a wife of yesterday. And the old man overflowed with emotion.

'We owe you much gratitude, Mademoiselle,' said

Agathe, 'for all the marks of attachment you have so long given to my brother, and for the care with which you provide for his happiness.'

'It is very true, my dear Agathe,' said the old man, 'she made me first know happiness; and she is a woman full of admirable qualities.'

'And so, brother, you cannot reward her too highly; you ought to have made her your wife. Yes! I am too religious a woman not to wish that I might see you obey the precepts of religion. You would both be the happier if you were not at war with law and morality. I came here, my dear brother, to appeal for help in very great trouble; but do not imagine that we intended to make the slightest remarks on the way in which you may dispose of your fortune.'

'Madame,' said Flore, 'we know that your father was unjust to you. Your brother can tell you,' she added, staring hard at her victim, 'that the only quarrels we have ever had, he and I, have been about you. I tell Monsieur that he owes you part of the fortune of which you were robbed by my poor benefactor—for he was my benefactor, your father was,' and she put on a tearful voice, 'and I shall never forget him—but your brother, Madame, has listened to reason——'

'Yes,' said old Rouget, 'when I make my will, you will not be forgotten——'

'We will not talk of that, brother; you do not know yet what my character is——'

From these beginnings the upshot of this first visit may be imagined. Rouget invited his sister to dinner for the next day but one.

During these three days the Knights of Idlesse caught an enormous number of rats, mice, and field-mice, which were turned out starving one fine night among the seed-corn, to the number of four hundred and thirty-six, among them many mothers with young. Not satisfied with having quartered these pensioners on Fario, the Knights

made some holes in the roof of the old chapel, and put in ten pigeons brought from ten different farmsteads. The creatures held high festival, with all the greater freedom because Fario's boy was led away by another young rascal, with whom he drank from morning till night, taking no care whatever of his master's merchandise.

Madame Bridau, in opposition to old Hochon's opinion, believed that her brother had not yet made his will; she purposed asking him what his intentions were with regard to Mademoiselle Brazier, on the first opportunity she might find of taking a walk with him alone; for Max and Flore constantly beguiled her with this hope, which was always deceived.

Though the Knights of the Order all tried to hit on a scheme for putting the two Parisians to flight, they devised nothing but impossible follies.

Hence at the end of a week, half of the time the Bridaus were to spend in Issoudun, they were no further forward than on the first day.

'Your lawyer does not know what a country town is,' said old Hochon to Madame Bridau. 'What you came here to do cannot be done in fourteen days, nor in fourteen months. You would have to be constantly with your brother, and instil into him some ideas of religion. You can only undermine the fortress guarded by Flore and Maxence by sapping it through a priest. That is my opinion, and it is high time you should act on it.'

'You have strange ideas of the priesthood,' said Madame Hochon to her husband.

'Oh!' cried the old man. 'There you are, you godly people!'

'God will not bless any endeavour that is based on sacrilege,' said Madame Bridau. 'To make use of religion for such a—— Oh! We should be worse than Flore!'

This conversation took place at breakfast, and François and Baruch both listened with open ears.

'Sacrilege!' cried old Hochon. 'But if some good Abbé, as clever as some I have known, understood the predicament in which you stand, he would not regard it as sacrilege to lead home to God your brother's erring soul, to bring him to true repentance for his sins, to persuade him to send away the woman who is the cause of the scandal—providing for her, of course—to point out to him that his conscience would rest in peace if he only left a few thousand francs a year to the Archbishop's little Seminary, and the remainder of his fortune to his legitimate heirs.'

The passive obedience exacted by the old miser from his children, and handed down to his grandchildren, who had indeed been left to his guardianship, and for whom he was amassing a large fortune—doing by them, he was wont to say, as he would do by himself—did not allow of the faintest sign of astonishment or disapproval on the part of Baruch and François; but they exchanged glances full of meaning, telling each other how fatal this idea would be to Max's interests.

'The truth is, Madame,' said Baruch, 'if you wish to inherit your brother's property, the only real way is this—you must remain at Issoudun as long as is necessary to employ him——'

'Mother,' Joseph put in, 'you will do well to write all this to Desroches. For my part, I look for nothing more from my uncle than what he has so kindly given me.'

After assuring himself of the great value of the thirty-nine pictures, Joseph had carefully unmounted the canvases, had pasted paper over them, laid them one over another flat in a huge case, and addressed it by carrier to Desroches, to whom he meant to send a letter of advice. This precious load had been sent off the day before.

'You are cheaply paid off,' said Monsieur Hochon.

'But I shall have no difficulty in getting a hundred and fifty thousand francs for the pictures,' said Joseph.

'A painter's notion!' said Monsieur Hochon, looking dubiously at Joseph.

'Listen,' said Joseph, turning to his mother, 'I am going to write to Desroches and explain the state of affairs here. If he advises you to stay, you shall stay. As to your place in the office, we can always find something else as good——'

'My dear boy,' said Madame Hochon, as they rose from table, 'I do not know what your uncle's pictures may be, but they ought to be good, judging by the places they came from. If they are worth even forty thousand francs, a thousand francs apiece, tell nobody. Though my grandchildren are discreet and well brought up, they might, without meaning any mischief, talk about this supposed treasure-trove; all Issoudun would hear of it, and the foe must not suspect the truth. You really behave like a child!'

In point of fact, by midday many persons in Issoudun, and foremost of all Maxence Gilet, had been informed of Joseph's opinion, which led to a great hunt for old pictures that had lain forgotten, and to the disinterment of some execrable daubs. Max repented of having prompted the old man to give away the pictures; and his rage against the rightful heirs, on learning old Hochon's scheme, was increased by what he called his stupidity. Religious influence on this feeble creature was the only thing to be dreaded. Hence the warning given him by his two allies confirmed Max in his determination to realise all Rouget's mortgages, and to borrow on his land so as to invest in State securities at once. But he considered the necessity for getting rid of the Parisians as even more pressing. Now the talents of a Mascarille or a Scapin would have found this a hard problem to solve.

Flore, counselled by Max, began to say that Monsieur tired himself too much by taking walks; that at his age he needed carriage exercise. This was necessary as a pretext for the expeditions to be made, without the

neighbours knowing it, to Bourges, Vierzon, Châteauroux, and Vatan, wherever this scheme for calling in his investments might require that Rouget, Max, and Flore should go. So by the end of the week all Issoudun was startled by the news that Père Rouget had sent to Bourges for a carriage, a step which the Knights of Idlesse interpreted in favour of la Rabouilleuse. Flore and Max purchased a hideous travelling-chaise with rickety windows and a split leather hood, that had seen two-and-twenty years, and nine campaigns; this they bought at a sale on the death of a colonel, a great friend of Marshal Bertrand's, who, during the absence of the Emperor's faithful follower, had undertaken the charge of his estates in le Berry. This vehicle, painted dark-green, was not unlike a barouche, but the pole had been altered and shafts substituted, so that it could be drawn by one horse. It was now one of those carriages which reduced fortunes have made so fashionable, which, indeed, were honestly designated as *demi-fortunes*, for they were originally called *seringues*. The lining of this *demi-fortune*, sold as a barouche, was moth-eaten; the trimmings were like a pensioner's stripes; it rattled like old iron; but it cost no more than four hundred and fifty francs, and Max bought of the troops in garrison at Bourges a strong, well-broken mare to draw it. He had this vehicle repainted dark-brown, and found a fairly good set of second-hand harness, and the town of Issoudun was agitated from top to bottom, on the watch for Père Rouget's 'turn-out.'

The first time the good man made use of his barouche the noise brought every household to the front door, and all the windows were full of peeping heads. The second time he drove as far as Bourges, where, to avoid all further trouble in connection with the transactions, advised—or, if you will, commanded—by Flore Brazier, he signed in the notary's office a power of attorney in favour of Maxence Gilet, enabling him to transfer all

the moneys mentioned in the document. Flore undertook to settle with Monsieur as to the loans in Issoudun and the immediate neighbourhood. Rouget went to the first notary in Bourges and desired him to find him a hundred and forty thousand francs on the security of his land.

No one at Issoudun knew anything about these proceedings, so quietly and cleverly carried out. Max, a good horseman, could get to Bourges and back between five in the morning and five in the afternoon on his horse, and Flore never left the old man. Old Rouget had consented without demur to the alterations which Flore had suggested to him; but he insisted that the bond bearing fifty thousand francs a year interest should stand as life-interest only in Mademoiselle Brazier's name, and that the capital should remain his absolutely. The tenacity displayed by the old man in the private struggle which arose over this question made Max very uneasy, for he fancied he could discern in it some reflections inspired by the sight of his natural heirs.

In the midst of these great changes, which Max hoped to conceal from the prying townsfolk, he forgot the corn-dealer. Fario was preparing to deliver his orders, after much travelling and bargaining, with a view to raise the price of seed-corn. But the day after his return to Issoudun, living opposite the Capuchin chapel, he saw the roof black with pigeons. He cursed himself for having neglected to examine the roof, and hastily went across to his store-house, where he found half his corn devoured. Myriads of traces left by mice, rats, and field-mice betrayed another cause of the ruin. The church was a perfect Noah's ark. But the Spaniard turned as white as linen with fury when, on trying to calculate the extent of the loss and damage, he discovered that the lower strata of grain were soaked and sprouting, from a quantity of water having been injected into the heart of the corn-heaps by means of a tin tube—an idea of Max's.

Pigeons and rats might be accounted for by animal instinct; but in this last piece of malice the hand of man was evident.

Fario sat down on an altar-step in a side chapel, and hid his head in his hands. After half an hour's meditations—a Spaniard's meditations—on looking up, he saw the squirrel which young Goddet had insisted on placing there as boarder, playing with its tail on the transom supporting the roof-beam. The Spaniard rose calmly, showing his shop-clerk a face as impassive as an Arab's. Fario made no lamentation. He went home, found some labourers to pack the good corn, and spread what was damp in the sun to dry, so as to save as much as possible; then he set to work to deliver his orders, calculating the loss at three-fifths. But as his own transactions had sent prices up, he lost again in repurchasing those three-fifths; thus his total loss was of more than half.

The corn-dealer, who had no enemies, unerringly attributed this piece of revenge to Gilet. It was clear to him that Max and some others, the inventors of so many nocturnal pranks, had undoubtedly dragged his cart up to the tower, and amused themselves by ruining him: his loss, indeed, amounted to a thousand crowns, almost all the capital he had laboriously accumulated since the peace. Inspired by the hope of revenge, the man put forth all the perseverance and acumen of a spy who has been promised a handsome reward. Lurking in ambush by night in the town, he obtained absolute proof of the proceedings of the Knights of Idlesse; he saw them, he counted them; he watched their trysts, and their suppers at la Cognette's; then he hid himself to witness one of their tricks, and became familiar with their nocturnal doings.

In spite of his rides and his anxieties, Max would not neglect this business of the night; in the first place, to prevent any one suspecting the grand financial opera-

tions carried on with Père Rouget's investments; and, in the second place, to keep his friends up to the mark. Now the Order had agreed to achieve a stroke which should be talked of for years. On a certain night every watch-dog in the town and suburbs was to have a pill of poison. Fario overheard them as they came out of la Cognette's, chuckling beforehand over the success of this practical joke, and the universal mourning to be caused by this massacre of the innocents. Besides, what fears this general execution would give rise to, by hinting at sinister designs on the houses thus deprived of their guardians!

'Fario's cart will be quite forgotten perhaps,' said Goddet.

Fario no longer needed this speech to confirm his suspicions; besides, he had laid his plans.

After a stay of three weeks, Agathe, like Madame Hochon, recognised the truth of the old miser's views—it would take years to counteract the influence exerted over her brother by la Rabouilleuse and Max. Agathe had made no progress in Jean-Jacques' confidence; she had never been left alone with him. On the contrary, Mademoiselle Brazier triumphed over the heirs by taking Agathe out driving in the carriage, seated by her on the back seat, while Monsieur Rouget and his nephew sat in front. Mother and son anxiously awaited a reply to their confidential letter to Desroches.

On the very eve of the day when the watch-dogs were to be poisoned, Joseph, who was dying of weariness at Issoudun, received two letters—one from Schinner, the great painter, whose age allowed of a closer and more intimate acquaintance than with Gros, their master, and the other from Desroches. This was the first, bearing the stamp of Beaumont-sur-Oise:—

'My dear Joseph,—I have finished the most impor-

tant paintings in the Château de Presles for the Comte de Sérizy. I have left the borders and decorative panels; and I have so strongly recommended you to the Count, and to Grindot, his architect, that you have only to pack up your brushes and come. The prices agreed on will satisfy you. I am off to Italy with my wife, so you can have Mistigris to help you. The young rascal is clever; I place him at your service. He is as lively as a Pierrot already at the idea of enjoying himself at Presles. Farewell, my dear Joseph; if I am away and send nothing to the next Salon, you must fill my place. Yes, dear Jojo, your picture is a masterpiece, I am sure of it; but a masterpiece that will raise a hue and cry of "Romanticism!" and you are preparing a life for yourself like that of the devil in holy water. But, after all, as that rogue Mistigris says—he transposes or puns on every proverb—life is bad to beat. What on earth are you doing at Issoudun? Farewell.—Your friend,

'SCHINNER.'

This was Desroches' letter:—

'MY DEAR JOSEPH,—Your Monsieur Hochon seems to me an old man of great good sense, and you give me a high idea of his intelligence; he is perfectly right. And, since you ask my opinion, I think your mother should stay at Issoudun with Madame Hochon, paying a small sum, say four hundred francs a year, as compensation for her board. Madame Bridau, I should say, should be entirely guided by Monsieur Hochon's advice. But your excellent mother will be full of scruples in opposition to people who have none, and whose conduct shows a masterly policy. That Maxence is a dangerous fellow, you are right there; he is a man of far stronger temper than Philippe. This rascal makes his vices serve his fortunes; he does not amuse himself for nothing, like your brother, whose follies were never of any use. All you tell me appals me, for I could not do much by going

to Issoudun. Monsieur Hochon, acting through your mother, will be of more use than I can be.

'As for you, you may as well come home; you are of no good at all in a business requiring constant alertness, minute observation, servile attentions, discretion in speech, and dissimulation in looks,—all quite antipathetic to an artist. If they tell you there is no will, they have had one made a long time since, you may be sure. But wills are not irrevocable; and as long as your imbecile uncle lives, he will certainly be open to the influence of remorse and religion. Your fortune will be the result of a pitched battle between the Church and la Rabouilleuse. A moment will inevitably come when that woman will lose her power over the old man, and religion will be all-powerful. So long as your uncle has made nothing over to them by deed of gift, nor altered his investments and holdings, at the moment when religion gets the upper hand everything will be possible.

'You had better beg Monsieur Hochon to keep an eye as far as possible on your uncle's possessions. It is important to ascertain whether he holds mortgages, and how and in whose name the deeds are drawn. It is so easy to fill an old man with fears for his life when he is stripping himself of his property in favour of strangers, that a rightful heir with a very little cunning can nip such spoliations in the bud. But is your mother, with her ignorance of the world, her disinterestedness, and her religious ideas, a likely person to manage such an intrigue?

'In short, I can only explain the position. What you have done so far must have given the alarm, and perhaps your antagonists are taking steps to protect themselves.'

'That is what I call sound advice, kindly given!' cried Monsieur Hochon, proud of finding himself appreciated by a Paris attorney.

'Oh, Desroches is a capital good fellow,' said Joseph.

'It might be useful to show that letter to the two women,' said the old man.

'Here it is,' said Joseph, giving the letter to Hochon. 'As for me, I will be off to-morrow, and will go to take leave of my uncle.'

'Ah!' said Monsieur Hochon, 'I see that in a postscript Monsieur Desroches desires you to burn the letter.'

'Burn it after showing it to my mother,' said the painter.

Joseph Bridau dressed, crossed the little avenue, and was shown in to his uncle, who was just finishing breakfast. Max and Flore were at table with him.

'Do not disturb yourself, my dear uncle; I have come to take leave of you.'

'You are going?' said Max with a look at Flore.

'Yes, I have some work to do at Monsieur de Sérizy's château, and I am all the more eager because he has a long enough arm to be of service to my poor brother with the Supreme Court.'

'Well, well; work,' said the old man, with a stupid look, and indeed Rouget seemed to Joseph extraordinarily altered. 'You must work. I am sorry you are going——'

'Oh, my mother will remain some time yet,' replied Joseph.

Max gave his lips a twist, which conveyed to the housekeeper, 'They are going to act on the plan Baruch spoke of.'

'I am very glad I came,' Joseph went on, 'for I have had the pleasure of making your acquaintance, and you have enriched my studio.'

'Yes, indeed!' said la Rabouilleuse, 'instead of enlightening your uncle as to the value of the pictures, which is said to be more than a hundred thousand francs, you packed them off to Paris pretty quick. Poor, dear man, he is like a child. . . . Why, I have just been told that there is at Bourges a little Poulet—I mean a Poussin—

which was in the Cathedral before the Revolution, and that alone is worth thirty thousand francs.'

'That was not right, nephew,' said the old man, at a nod from Max, which Joseph could not see.

'Come now, honestly,' said the soldier, laughing, 'on your honour, what do you suppose your pictures are worth? By Jove! you have jockeyed your uncle very prettily. Well, you had a right to do it. Uncles are made to be plundered. Nature bestowed no uncles on me; but, by all that's holy, if I had any, I would not spare them!'

'Did you know, Monsieur,' asked Flore of Rouget, 'how much your pictures were worth?—How much did you say, Monsieur Joseph?'

'Well,' said the painter, turning as red as a beetroot, 'the pictures are worth a good round sum.'

'It is said that you valued them at a hundred and fifty thousand francs to Monsieur Hochon. Is that true?'

'Yes,' said the painter, as candid as a child.

'And had you any intention,' said Flore to the old man, 'of giving your nephew a hundred and fifty thousand francs?'

'Never, never,' cried Rouget, on whom Flore had fixed a steady eye.

'It is quite easily settled,' said the painter. 'I will send them back to you, uncle.'

'No, no, keep them,' said the old fellow.

'I will send them back, uncle,' repeated Joseph, offended by the insulting silence of Maxence Gilet and Flore Brazier. 'I have in my brush the means of making my fortune, without owing anything to anybody—even to my uncle. I wish you good day, Mademoiselle. Good morning, Monsieur.'

And Joseph recrossed the road in a state of irritation which an artist may conceive of. All the Hochon family were in the sitting-room. Seeing Joseph gesticulating and muttering to himself, they inquired what was

the matter. Then, before Baruch and François, the painter, as open as the day, repeated the scene he had just gone through, which, in a couple of hours, was the talk of the whole town, every one embroidering the story with more or less impudent additions. Some maintained that the painter had been roughly handled by Max, others that he had been insolent to Mademoiselle Brazier, and that Max had turned him out of the house.

'Oh, what a child your boy is!' said Hochon to Madame Bridau. 'The simple fellow has been fooled by a scene got up for the day when he should be leaving. Why, Max and la Rabouilleuse have known for this fortnight past what the value of the pictures is, since Joseph was so silly as to mention it in the presence of my grandsons, who were only too eager to repeat it to all the world. Your artist ought to have left without notice.'

'My son is right to restore the pictures if they are so valuable,' said Agathe.

'If they are worth two hundred thousand francs, by his account,' said old Hochon, 'he is an idiot for allowing himself to be compelled to return them; for, at any rate, you would have had that much of the property, whereas, as matters stand, you will get nothing!—And this is almost reason enough for your brother to refuse to see you again.'

Between midnight and one in the morning the Knights of Idlesse began their distribution of free rations to the dogs of the town. This memorable expedition ended only at three in the morning, and then the mischievous wretches met for supper at la Cognette's. At half-past four, in the morning twilight, they crept home. At the instant when Max turned out of the Rue de l'Avenier into the Grand' Rue, Fario, in ambush in a recess, stabbed him with a knife, aiming straight at the heart, pulled out the weapon, and fled to the moat by la Villate, where he wiped the knife on his handkerchief.

The Spaniard then rinsed the handkerchief in the Borrowed Stream, and quietly went home to Saint-Paterne, where he went to bed, getting in at a window he had left unfastened; his new shop-boy woke him next morning, finding him sound asleep.

Max as he fell uttered a fearful shriek, too genuine to be misunderstood. Lousteau-Prangin, the son of a magistrate, a distant relation of the late sub-delegate, and young Goddet, who both lived at the bottom of the Grand' Rue, ran up the street again as fast as they could fly, saying, 'Max is being killed! Help!'—But not a dog barked, and the inhabitants, inured to the tricks of these night-birds, did not stir.

When the two Knights came up Max had fainted. It was necessary to call up Monsieur Goddet the elder. Max had recognised Fario; but when, at five in the morning, he had fully recovered his wits, seeing himself surrounded by several persons, and feeling that the wound was not mortal, it suddenly struck him that he might take advantage of this attempted murder, and he exclaimed in a feeble voice, 'I fancied I saw the eyes and face of that damned painter.'

Upon this, Lousteau-Prangin ran off to fetch his father, the examining judge. Max was carried home by old Cognet, the younger Goddet, and two men whom they got out of bed. La Cognette and Goddet *senior* walked by the side of Max, who was laid on a mattress placed on two poles. Monsieur Goddet would do nothing till Max was in his bed.

Those who carried him naturally looked across at Hochon's house while Kouski was getting up, and they saw the woman-servant sweeping. In this house, as in most country places, the door was opened at a very early hour. The only words Max had spoken had roused suspicion, and the surgeon called across the road—

'Gritte, is Monsieur Joseph Bridau in bed?'

'Dear me,' said she, 'he went out at about half-past

four; he walked up and down his room all night. I cant't think what had taken him.'

'A pretty fellow, is your painter!' said one and another.

And the party went in, leaving the woman in consternation; she had seen Max lying on the mattress, his shirt stained with blood, apparently dying.

What had 'taken' Joseph and disturbed him all night, every artist will understand. He pictured himself as the talk of Issoudun; he was supposed to be a sharper, anything but what he wanted to be—an honest fellow, a hard-working artist. He would have given his own picture to be able to fly like a swallow to Paris and fling his uncle's pictures in Max's face. To be the victim and be thought the spoiler! What a mockery! And so at daybreak he had rushed out of the house, and was pacing the avenue of poplars leading to Tivoli to walk off his excitement. While the innocent youth was promising himself, by way of consolation, never to set foot in the place again, Max was preparing for him a catastrophe full of horror to a sensitive mind.

As soon as Monsieur Goddet had probed the wound, and ascertained that the knife, turned by a little pocket-book, had happily missed aim, though it had left a frightful gash, he did as all doctors do, and especially country surgeons—he gave himself airs of importance, and 'could not answer for the patient's life.' Then, after dressing the rascally soldier's wound, he went away. This medical verdict he repeated to la Rabouilleuse, to Jean-Jacques Rouget, to Kouski, and Védie. La Rabouilleuse went back to her dear Max drowned in tears, while Kouski and Védie informed the crowd assembled at the door that the captain was as good as done for. The result of this news was that above two hundred persons collected in groups on the Place Saint-Jean and in the upper and lower Narette.

'I shall not be in bed a month,' said Max to Flore,

'and I know who struck the blow. But we will take advantage of it to get rid of the Parisians. I said I fancied I had recognised the painter; so pretend that I am dying, and try to have Joseph Bridau arrested; we will give him a taste of prison for a couple of days. I think I know the mother well enough to feel sure that she will be off to Paris then post-haste with her painter. Then we need no longer fear the volley of priests they talked of firing at our old idiot.'

When Flore Brazier went down, she found the mob quite prepared to receive the impression she wished to make on them; she appeared before them with tears in her eyes, and remarked that the painter, 'who for that matter looked bad enough for anything,' had quarrelled fiercely with Max the day before about the pictures he had 'boned' from Père Rouget. 'That brigand—for you have only to look in his face to feel sure—thinks that if Max were out of the way, his uncle would leave him his fortune. As if,' added she, 'a brother wasn't closer than a nephew! Max is Doctor Rouget's son; the old man owned up as much afore he died.'

'Ay, he thought he could do the trick before he left; he planned it very neatly; he is going to-day,' said one of the Knights of Idlesse.

'Max has not a single enemy in the town,' observed another.

'Besides, Max recognised the painter,' said la Rabouilleuse.

'Where is that damned Parisian? Let us find him,' cried one and another.

'Find him? Why, he stole out of Monsieur Hochon's house before daylight.'

One of the Knights at once ran off to find Monsieur Mouilleron. The crowd was still swelling, and voices grew threatening. Excited groups filled the whole of the Grande Narette; others stood in front of the Church

of Saint-Jean. A mob filled the Villate gate where the lower Narette ends. It was impossible to stir above or below the Place Saint-Jean. It was like the fag-end of a procession. And Messieurs Lousteau-Prangin and Mouilleron, with the Superintendent of Police, the Lieutenant of the Gendarmerie, and his sergeant with two gendarmes, had some difficulty in getting to the spot, which they reached between two hedges of the populace, whose shouts and yells could not fail to prejudice them against the 'Parisian,' to whom circumstantial evidence pointed so strongly though he was unjustly accused.

After an interview between Max and the lawyers, Monsieur Mouilleron sent the Superintendent of Police and the sergeant, with one gendarme, to examine what, in the language of police reports, is called the Scene of the Crime. Then Mouilleron and Lousteau-Prangin, escorted by the lieutenant, crossed from Père Rouget's house to Monsieur Hochon's, which was guarded at the garden entrance by two gendarmes, while two more were posted at the street-door. The mob was still collecting; the whole town was in a hubbub in the Grand' Rue.

Gritte had long since flown, breathless with terror, to her master's room, exclaiming—

'Monsieur, they are going to rob the house.—All the town is in a riot!—Monsieur Maxence Gilet is killed; he is going to die!—And they say that it was Monsieur Joseph that stabbed him!'

Monsieur Hochon hastily dressed and came down; but seeing the furious crowd, he at once retreated within doors and barred the entrance. On questioning Gritte, he ascertained that his guest, after walking about all night in great excitement, had gone out before daylight, and that he had not come in. Much alarmed, he went to his wife's room; the noise had just roused her, and he told her the horrible report which, true or false, had brought all Issoudun out to the Place Saint-Jean.

'Of course he is innocent!' said Madame Hochon.

'But before his innocence is proved, the mob may force their way in and rob us,' said Monsieur Hochon, who had turned ashy pale. He had gold in his cellars.

'And Agathe?'

'She is sleeping like a marmot.'

'Ah, so much the better!' said Madame Hochon; 'I only wish she could sleep on till this matter is cleared up. Such a blow might kill the poor child.'

But Agathe soon woke; she came down half-dressed, for Gritte's hints and concealments, when she questioned the woman, had sickened her heart and brain. She found Madame Hochon pale, and her eyes full of tears, standing at one of the drawing-room windows with her husband.

'Courage, my child! God sends us all our troubles,' said the old lady. 'Joseph is accused——'

'Of what?'

'Of a wicked deed he cannot possibly have done,' said Madame Hochon.

On hearing this speech, and seeing the lieutenant of the watch come in with Messieurs Lousteau-Prangin and Mouilleron, Agathe fainted away.

'Look here,' said Monsieur Hochon to his wife and Gritte, 'just carry Madame Bridau away. Women are only a trouble under such circumstances. Go away, both of you, with her, and stay in your room.—Gentlemen, pray be seated,' added the old man. 'The mistake to which we owe this visit will, I hope, soon be cleared up.'

'Even if it is a mistake,' said Monsieur Mouilleron, 'the mob are so madly exasperated, and excited to such a pitch, that I am alarmed for the accused.—I wish I could get him to the Court-house, and soothe the public mind.'

'Who could have imagined that Monsieur Maxence Gilet was so much beloved?' said Lousteau-Prangin.

'There are twelve hundred people at this moment

pouring out of the Roman suburb,' said the lieutenant, 'so one of my men has just told me—and shrieking for the assassin's death.'

'Where is your guest?' asked Monsieur Mouilleron.

'He is gone for a walk in the country, I believe,' said Hochon.

'Call back Gritte,' said the examining judge gravely. 'I hoped that Monsieur Bridau might not have left the house. You know, of course, that the crime was committed only a few yards from this house, just at daybreak?'

While Monsieur Hochon went to fetch Gritte, the three functionaries exchanged glances full of meaning.

'I never took to that painter's face,' said the lieutenant to Monsieur Mouilleron.

'Listen to me,' said the lawyer to Gritte, as she came in. 'You saw Monsieur Joseph Bridau go out this morning, I am told?'

'Yes, sir,' replied she, shaking like a leaf.

'At what hour?'

'Directly after I got up; for he was tramping in his room all night, and he was dressed when I came down.'

'Was it daylight?'

'Twilight.'

'And he seemed excited?'

'I should think he did!—He seemed to me quite how-come-you-so.'

'Send one of your men for my clerk,' said Lousteau-Prangin to the lieutenant, 'and tell him to bring forms——'

'Good God! don't be in a hurry,' said Monsieur Hochon. 'The young man's excitement may be accounted for without any premeditated crime. He is starting for Paris to-day in consequence of a matter in which Gilet and Mademoiselle Flore Brazier chose to doubt his honesty.'

'Yes, the business about the pictures,' said Monsieur

Mouilleron. 'It was the cause of a vehement quarrel yesterday, and artists are always ready to catch fire under the thatch, as they say.'

'Who in all Issoudun would have any interest in killing Max?' said Lousteau. 'Nobody; no jealous husband, no one whatever, for the man has never injured any one.'

'But what was Monsieur Gilet doing in the streets at half-past four in the morning?' said Monsieur Hochon.

'Look here, Monsieur Hochon, leave us to manage our own business,' replied Mouilleron. 'You do not know all. Max saw and knew your painter——'

At this instant a roar started from the bottom of the town, increasing as it rolled up the Grande Narette like the advance of a peal of thunder.

'Here he is!—here he is! They have got him!' These words stood out clearly above the deep bars of a terrific growl from the mob. In fact, poor Joseph Bridau, coming quietly home past the mill at Landrôle to be in time for breakfast, was seen as he reached the Place Misère by everybody at once. Happily for him, two men at arms came running down to rescue him from the mob of the Roman suburb, who had already seized him roughly by the arms, threatening to kill him.

'Make way! Clear out!' said the gendarmes, calling two others to come and walk one in front and one behind Bridau.

'You see, Monsieur,' said one of the four who had taken hold of him, 'our skin is in danger at this moment as much as yours. Innocent or guilty, we must protect you against the riot caused by the murder of Captain Gilet; these people will not be satisfied with accusing you; they believe you to be the assassin as sure as death. Monsieur Gilet is worshipped by those men—look at them; they would love to execute justice on you themselves. We saw them in 1830 when they thrashed the excise men; it was no joke, I can tell you.'

Joseph Bridau turned as pale as death, and collected all his strength to keep on his feet.

'After all,' said he, 'I had nothing to do with it. Come on!'

And he had to bear his cross! He was the object of yells, abuse, threats of death, at every step of the horrible walk from the Place Misère to the Place Saint-Jean. The gendarmes were obliged to draw their swords to intimidate the angry crowd who threw stones at them. The force barely escaped being hurt, and some of the missiles hit Joseph's legs, shoulders, and hat.

'Here we are,' said one of the men, as they went into Monsieur Hochon's room; 'and it was not an easy job, Lieutenant.'

'Now, the next thing is to disperse this crowd, and I see but one way, gentlemen,' said the officer to the magistrates. 'It is to get Monsieur Bridau to the Palais de Justice by making him walk between you. I and all my men will keep close round you. It is impossible to answer for what may happen when you are face to face with six thousand furious creatures.'

'You are right,' said Monsieur Hochon, still quaking for his gold.

'If that is the best way you have at Issoudun of protecting innocence, I must congratulate you!' said Joseph. 'I have already been within an ace of being stoned——'

'Do you want to see your host's house attacked and pillaged?' said the lieutenant. 'Could we, with our swords, offer effectual resistance to a surge of men driven on by a posse of angry people who know nothing of the forms of justice?'

'Oh! come on, gentlemen; we will talk it out afterwards,' said Joseph, who had recovered his presence of mind.

'Make way, my friends,' said the lieutenant, 'he is arrested; we are going to take him to the Palais de Justice.'

'Respect the law, my good fellows!' said Monsieur Mouilleron.

'Would not you sooner see him guillotined?' said one of the gendarmes to a menacing group.

'Ay, ay!' cried an infuriated bystander. 'Guillotine him!'

'He is to be guillotined!' repeated some women.

At the bottom of the Grande Narette they were saying—

'They are taking him off to be guillotined; the knife was found upon him! Oh! the wretch!—That is your Parisian!—Why, he has crime written on his face!'

Though Joseph's blood seethed in his head, he walked from the Place Saint-Jean to the Palais de Justice with admirable coolness and dignity. He was, nevertheless, glad enough when he found himself in Monsieur Lousteau-Prangin's office.

'I need hardly tell you, gentlemen, I suppose, that I am innocent,' said he, addressing Monsieur Mouilleron, Monsieur Lousteau-Prangin, and the clerk. 'I can only beg you to help me to prove my innocence. I know nothing about the matter——'

When the judge had explained to Joseph all the evidence against him, ending with Max's deposition, Joseph was astounded.

'Why,' said he, 'I did not leave the house till past five; I walked down the Grand' Rue, and at half-past five I was gazing at the front of your parish church of Saint-Cyr. I stopped to speak for a moment to the bell-ringer, who was about to toll the *Angelus*, asking him some questions about the building, which had struck me as quaint and unfinished. Then I crossed the vegetable market, where the women were already collecting. From thence I went by the Place Misère and the Pont-aux-Anes to the mill of Landrôle, where I quietly watched the ducks for five or six minutes; the miller's men must have noticed me. I saw some women coming

to the washing-place; they must be there still; they began to laugh at me, remarking that I was no beauty; I replied that an ugly case might contain jewels. I went along the avenue as far as Tivoli, where I talked to the gardener. . . . Verify all these statements, and do not arrest me I beg, for I give you my word of honour to remain in your office till you are convinced of my innocence.'

This rational statement, made without any hesitation, and with the ease of a man sure of his case, made some impression on the lawyers.

'Well, we must summons and find all these people,' said Monsieur Mouilleron, 'but that is not to be done in a day. Make up your mind, in your own interest, to remain in the lock-up of the Palais de Justice.'

'Then let me write to reassure my mother, poor woman.—Oh, you may read the letter!'

The request was too reasonable to be refused, and Joseph wrote these few lines:—

'Do not be uneasy, my dear mother; the mistake of which I am the victim will be easily cleared up, and I have given the clue. To-morrow, or perhaps this evening, I shall be free. I embrace you; and say to Monsieur and Madame Hochon how grieved I am by this worry, which is indeed no fault of mine, for it is the result of some mistake which I do not yet understand.'

When this letter arrived, Madame Bridau was half-dead of nervous terrors, and the remedies Monsieur Goddet was persuading her to sip had no effect whatever. But the reading of this letter was like a balm; after a few hysterical sobs Agathe sank into the quiescence that succeeds such a crisis.

When Monsieur Goddet came again to see his patient, he found her regretting having left Paris.

'God is punishing me,' said she, with tears in her eyes. 'Oh, my dear godmother, ought I not to have

trusted in Him, and have looked to His mercy for my brother's fortune?'

'Madame,' said Hochon in her ear, 'if your son is innocent, Max is an utter villain, and we shall not overmatch him in the business; so go back to Paris.'

'And how is Monsieur Gilet going on?' asked Madame Hochon of the doctor.

'The wound is serious, but not mortal. A month of care, and he will be all right again. I left him writing to Monsieur Mouilleron to request him to release your son,' said he to Madame Bridau. 'Oh! Max is a good fellow. I told him what a state you were in; and then he remembered a detail of the murderer's dress, which proved to him that he could not be your son; the assassin had on list shoes, and it is perfectly certain that your son went out walking in boots.'

'Ah! God forgive him the ill he has done me!'

At nightfall a man had left a note for Gilet, written in a feigned hand, and in these words:—

'Captain Gilet must not leave an innocent man in the hands of the law. The person who dealt the blow promises not to repeat it if Monsieur Gilet delivers Monsieur Joseph Bridau without denouncing the real culprit.'

On reading this letter, which he burnt, Max wrote to Monsieur Mouilleron a note mentioning the remark he had made to Monsieur Goddet, begging him to release Joseph, and to come and see him that he might explain matters.

By the time this note reached Monsieur Mouilleron, Lousteau-Prangin had already proved the truth of Joseph's account of himself, by the evidence of the bell-ringer, of a market-woman, of the washerwomen, the men of the mill, and the gardener from Frapesle. Max's letter finally demonstrated the innocence of the accused, whom Monsieur Mouilleron himself escorted back to Monsieur Hochon's. Joseph was received by his mother

with such eager tenderness, that, like the husband in la Fontaine's fable, this poor misprized son was thankful to chance for an annoyance which had secured him such a demonstration of affection.

'Of course,' said Monsieur Mouilleron, with an all-knowing air, 'I saw at once, by the way you faced the mob, that you were innocent; but in spite of my convictions, you see, when you know what Issoudun is, the best way to protect you was to take you to prison as we did. I must say you put a good face on the matter.'

'I was thinking of something else,' replied the artist simply. 'I know an officer who told me that he was once arrested in Dalmatia under somewhat similar circumstances, on his way home from an early morning walk, by an excited mob.—The similarity struck me, and I was studying all those heads with the idea of painting a riot in 1793. . . . And then I was saying to myself, 'Greedy wretch! you have got no more than you deserve for coming fortune-hunting instead of painting in your studio——'

'If you will allow me to offer you a piece of advice,' said the public prosecutor, 'you will get into a post-chaise this evening at eleven o'clock—the postmaster will let you have one—and get back to Paris by diligence from Bourges.'

'That is my opinion too,' said Monsieur Hochon, who was dying to be rid of his guest.

'And it is my most earnest wish to be out of Issoudun, though I leave my only friend here,' replied Agathe, taking Madame Hochon's hand and kissing it. 'When shall I see you again?'

'Ah! my child, we shall never meet again till we meet above! We have suffered so much here,' she added, in an undertone, 'that God will have pity on us.'

A moment after, when Monsieur Mouilleron had been over to see Max, Gritte greatly astonished Monsieur and Madame Hochon, Agathe, Joseph, and Adolphine

by announcing a call from Monsieur Rouget. Jean-Jacques had come to take leave of his sister, and to offer her the carriage to take her to Bourges.

'Ah, your pictures have done us an ill-turn,' said Agathe.

'Keep them, sister,' said the old man, who did not yet believe in the value of the paintings.

'Neighbour Rouget,' said Monsieur Hochon, 'our relations are our best friends and protectors, especially when they are such as your sister Agathe and your nephew Joseph.'

'Perhaps so,' said the old fellow, in bewilderment.

'You must be thinking of making a Christian end,' said Madame Hochon.

'Oh, Jean-Jacques, what a day this has been!' said Agathe.

'Will you accept my carriage?' asked Rouget.

'No, brother,' replied Madame Bridau. 'Thank you, all the same. I wish you good health!'

Rouget allowed his sister and nephew to embrace him, then he went away after a cool leave-taking.

Baruch, at a word from his grandfather, had hurried off to the posting-house. At eleven that evening the two Parisians, packed into a wicker chaise with one horse ridden by a postilion, left Issoudun. Adolphine and Madame Hochon had tears in their eyes; they alone regretted Agathe and Joseph.

'They are gone!' cried François Hochon, going into Max's room with la Rabouilleuse.

'Well, the trick is done!' said Max, weakened by fever.

'But what did you say to old Mouilleron?' asked François.

'I told him that I had almost given my assassin just cause to wait for me at a street corner; that the man was quite capable, if the law were at his heels, of killing me like a dog before he could be caught. In consequence, I begged Mouilleron and Prangin to pretend

to be hunting him down, but in fact to leave the man alone, unless they wanted to see me a dead man.'

'I hope now, Max,' said Flore, 'that you will remain quiet at night for some little time.'

'Well, we are quit of the Parisians at any rate,' cried Max. 'The man who stabbed me did not imagine he was doing us such good service.'

Next day, with the exception of a few very quiet and reserved people who shared the views of Monsieur and Madame Hochon, all the town rejoiced over the departure of the Bridaus, though it was due to a deplorable mistake, as if the event were a triumph of the provinces over Paris. Some of Max's friends expressed themselves in hard terms.

'Well indeed! Did those Parisians imagine that we are all idiots, and that they had only to hold out a hat for fortunes to pour into it.'

'They came in search of wool, and they have gone away shorn, for the nephew is not to his uncle's taste.'

'And they had the advice of a Paris lawyer, if you please——'

'Oh, ho! They had laid a plan then?'

'Why, yes, a plan to get round Père Rouget; but the Parisians saw that they were not equal to it, and their lawyer won't laugh at the natives of le Berry——'

'But it is abominable, you know!'

'That is your Parisian!'

'La Rabouilleuse saw that she was attacked, and she defended herself——'

'And quite right too!'

To every one in the town Agathe and Joseph were 'Parisians'—strangers—foreigners. They preferred Max and Flore.

With what satisfaction Agathe and Joseph found themselves at home in their little lodging in the Rue Mazarine may be imagined. In the course of the

journey the artist had recovered his spirits, crushed for a time by the scene of his arrest, and by twenty hours in prison; but he could not rally his mother. Agathe could the less get over it, because the trial for military conspiracy before the Supreme Court was coming on.

Philippe's conduct, in spite of the skill of an advocate recommended by Desroches, gave rise to suspicions unfavourable to his reputation. So, as soon as Joseph had reported to Desroches all that had occurred at Issoudun, he started forthwith, accompanied by Mistigris, for the Comte de Sérizy's château, so as to hear nothing of this trial, which lasted twenty days.

It is useless here to enlarge on facts which are part of contemporary history. Whether it was that he played a part dictated to him, or that he turned King's evidence, Philippe's sentence was to police surveillance for five years; and he was required to set out, the very day he was released, for Autun, the town assigned to him as his place of residence during those five years. This sentence was a form of detention similar to that of prisoners on parole, who are confined within the walls of a town.

On hearing that the Comte de Sérizy, one of the peers appointed by the Upper Chamber to sit on the commission, was employing Joseph to decorate his house at Presles, Desroches craved an audience of this minister, and found him very well inclined to help Joseph, whose acquaintance he happened to have made. Desroches explained the pecuniary difficulties of the two brothers, mentioning the good service done by their father, and the way in which he had been forgotten under the Restoration.

'Such injustice as this, Monseigneur,' said the attorney, 'is a permanent source of irritation and discontent. You knew the father; then put it in the power of his sons to acquire a fortune.'

He then briefly set forth the state of the family affairs at Issoudun, craving that the all-powerful vice-president

of the Council would take some steps to persuade the Chief Commissioner of Police to transfer Philippe from Autun to Issoudun as a place of exile. Finally, he mentioned Philippe's abject poverty, and begged a pension of sixty francs a month, which the War Office might, in common decency, grant to a retired Lieutenant-Colonel.

'I will get all you ask done,' said the Count, 'for it all seems to me quite just.'

Three days after, Desroches, armed with the necessary warrants, went to fetch Philippe from the prison cell of the Supreme Court, and took him to his own house in the Rue de Béthizy. There the young attorney gave the dreadful soldier one of those unanswerable sermons in which a lawyer places things in their true light, using the crudest language to epitomise the facts of his clients' conduct, to analyse their ideas, and reduce them to the simplest expression, when he takes enough interest in a man to preach to him. After crushing the Emperor's staff-officer by accusing him of reckless dissipation, and of causing his mother's misfortunes and the death of old Madame Descoings, he told him how matters stood at Issoudun, explaining them from his own point of view, and thoroughly unveiling the schemes and the character of Maxence Gilet and la Rabouilleuse. The political outlaw, who was gifted with keen perceptions in such matters, listened far more intently to this part of Desroches' lecture than to the first.

'This being the state of affairs,' said the lawyer, 'you may repair so much as is reparable of the mischief you have done to your excellent family—since you cannot restore to life the poor woman whose death lies at your door; but you alone can——'

'But how can I do it?' asked Philippe.

'I have interceded for you to be quartered at Issoudun instead of at Autun.'

Philippe's face, grown very thin, and almost sinister,

furrowed as it was by suffering and privation, was suddenly lighted up by a flash of satisfaction.

'You alone, I was saying, can rescue your uncle Rouget's fortune, of which, by this time, half, perhaps, has disappeared in the maw of that wolf called Gilet,' Desroches went on. 'You know all the facts; now you must act upon them. I suggest no scheme; I have no ideas on the subject. Besides, every plan might need modifying on the scene of action. You have a very strong adversary; the rascal is very astute, and the way in which he tried to get back the pictures given to Joseph by your uncle, and succeeded in casting the odium of a crime on your poor brother, reveals an unscrupulous opponent. So be prudent; try to behave yourself in your own interest, if you cannot otherwise control yourself.—Without saying a word to Joseph, whose pride as an artist would rise in arms, I sent the pictures back to Monsieur Hochon, writing to him to deliver them only to you.—Maxence Gilet is brave . . .'

'So much the better,' said Philippe; 'I trust to the rascal's courage to enable me to succeed, for a coward would go away from Issoudun.'

'Very good. Now, think of your mother, whose love for you is worthy of worship; and of your brother, whom you have used as your milch-cow . . .'

'What! he mentioned those trifles to you?' cried Philippe.

'Come, come; I am a friend of the family, and I know more about you than they do.'

'What do you know?' asked Philippe.

'You turned traitor to your fellow-conspirators . . .'

'I!' cried Philippe; 'I! a staff-officer of the Emperor's! Get along! We took in the Chamber of Peers, the lawyers, the Government, and the whole blessed boiling! The King's men saw nothing but the blaze . . .'

'So much the better if it is true,' replied the lawyer. 'But, you see, the Bourbons cannot be overthrown; they

have Europe on their side; and you should try to make your peace with the War Office—Oh! you will when you are a rich man. To grow rich, you and your brother must get hold of your uncle. If you want to bring a matter requiring so much skill, judgment, and patience to a good end, you have enough to keep your hands full all your five years——'

'No, no,' interrupted Philippe, 'the thing must be done quickly. That Gilet may get possession of my uncle's money and invest it in that woman's name, then all would be lost.'

'Well, Monsieur Hochon is a shrewd, clear-sighted man. Take his advice. You have your pass for the journey, your place is taken by the Orleans diligence for half-past seven, your trunk is packed.—Come to dinner.'

'I have not a thing but what I stand up in,' said Philippe, opening his wretched blue great-coat. 'But I want three things, which I would ask you to beg my friend Giroudeau, Finot's uncle, to send after me—my cavalry sword, my rapier, and my pistols.'

'You want a good deal besides,' said the lawyer with a shudder, as he looked at his client. 'You shall have three months advanced pay to get you decent clothing.'

'Hallo! are you here, Godeschal?' cried Philippe, recognising Mariette's brother in Desroches' head-clerk.

'Yes; I have been with Monsieur Desroches these two months.'

'And he will stay here, I hope,' said Desroches, 'till he buys a practice.'

'And Mariette?' asked Philippe, touched by the thought of her.

'She is waiting for the new house to be opened.'

'It would not cost her much to see me once more,' said Philippe. 'However, as she pleases!'

After the scanty dinner, paid for by Desroches, who was giving his head-clerk his board, the two young

lawyers saw the political outlaw into the coach, and wished him good luck.

On the 2nd of November, All Souls' Day, Philippe Bridau presented himself before the head of the police at Issoudun to have his pass countersigned on the day of his arrival; then, by that functionary's instructions, he found a lodging in the Rue de l'Avenier.

The news immediately spread through Issoudun that one of the officers involved in the late conspiracy was quartered in the town, and the sensation was all the greater because it was understood that this officer was the brother of the painter who had been so unjustly arrested. Maxence Gilet, by this time quite recovered from his wound, had carried through the difficult business of calling in the moneys placed on mortgage by Père Rouget, and having them invested in the funds. The loan of a hundred and forty thousand francs, raised by the old man on his land, had produced a great sensation, for in the country everything is known. On behalf of the Bridaus, Monsieur Hochon, shocked at this necessity, questioned old Monsieur Héron, Rouget's notary, as to the object of this change of investments.

'If Père Rouget changes his mind, his heirs will owe me a votive offering,' cried Monsieur Héron. 'But for me, the old man would have invested the capital of fifty thousand francs a year in the name of Maxence Gilet. But I told Mademoiselle Brazier that she had better be satisfied with the will, or risk an action for undue influence, seeing the abundant proof of their manœuvring afforded by the transfers made in every direction. To gain time I advised Maxence and his mistress to let people forget this sudden change in the old boy's habits.'

'Ah! constitute yourself the ally and protector of the Bridaus, for they are penniless,' said Monsieur Hochon, who could not forgive Max for the terrors he had endured when fearing that his house would be pillaged.

Maxence Gilet and Flore Brazier, untouched by all misgiving, made light of the advent of old Rouget's elder nephew. The moment Philippe should cause them any anxiety, they knew they could transfer the securities to either of themselves by making Rouget sign a power of attorney. If he should alter his will, fifty thousand francs a year was a very handsome plum of consolation, especially after burthening the real estate with a mortgage of a hundred and forty thousand francs.

The morning after his arrival Philippe called on his uncle at about ten o'clock; he was bent on exhibiting himself in his dreadful old clothes. And, indeed, when the discharged patient from the hospital, the prisoner from the Luxembourg, entered the sitting-room, Flore Brazier felt her heart chill at his repulsive appearance. Gilet, too, felt that shock to the mind and feelings by which Nature warns us of some latent hostility or looming danger. While Philippe had acquired an indescribably sinister expression of countenance from his late misfortunes, his dress certainly added to the effect. The wretched blue overcoat was buttoned in military style up to his chin, for melancholy reasons indeed, but it showed too plainly what it was meant to hide. The edge of his trousers, fringed like a pensioner's coat, revealed abject squalor. His boots left damp blots of muddy water oozing from the gaping seams. The grey hat the Colonel held showed a hideously greasy lining. His walking-stick, a cane that had lost its varnish, had stood, no doubt, in all the corners of the cafés of Paris, and its battered ferule must have dipped in many a mud-heap. From a stiff velvet collar that showed the paper lining, rose a head exactly like Frédérick Lemaître when made up for the last act of *la Vie d'un Joueur*; the breakdown of a still powerful man was visible in a coppery complexion that looked green in patches. Such complexions are to be seen in the faces of debauchees who have spent many nights at play; their eyes are surrounded by a dark,

sooty ring, the eyelids vinous rather than red, the brow ominous from all the ruin it betrays. Philippe's cheeks were furrowed and hollow, for he had scarcely recovered from his hospital treatment. His head was bald, a few locks left at the back ended by his ears. The pure blue of his glittering eyes had assumed a cold, steely hue.

'Good morning, uncle,' said he in a husky voice; 'I am your nephew, Philippe Bridau. This is how the Bourbons treat a lieutenant-colonel, a veteran of the old army, a man who carried the Emperor's orders at the battle of Montereau. I should be ashamed if my great-coat were to fall open, on Mademoiselle's account. After all, it is the rule of the game! We chose to begin it again, and we were beaten.—I am residing in your town by orders of the police, on full pay and allowances of sixty francs a month. So the good people of Issoudun need not fear that I shall raise the price of victuals.—I see you are in good and fair company.'

'Oh! so you are my nephew . . .' said Jean-Jacques.

'But pray ask the Colonel to stay to breakfast,' said Flore.

'No, Madame, thank you,' replied Philippe; 'I have breakfasted. Besides, I would sooner cut my hand off than ask my uncle for a bit of bread or a single centime after what happened in this town to my brother and my mother. At the same time, I did not think it seemly that I should live in Issoudun without paying my respects to him now and then. But for the rest, you can do as you please,' said he, holding out his hand, in which Rouget placed his for Philippe to shake, 'just as you please; I shall take no exception so long as the honour of the Bridaus is untouched.'

Gilet could watch the Lieutenant-Colonel at his leisure, for Philippe avoided looking in his direction in a very pointed way. Though the blood boiled in his veins, it was very important to Max that he should behave with that prudence of great diplomates which so

often resembles cowardice, and not flare out like a young man; he sat calm and cold.

'It would not be seemly,' said Flore, 'that you should live on sixty francs a month under the very nose of your uncle with forty thousand francs a year, and who has behaved so handsome to Monsieur Gilet, the Captain here, his natural half-brother——'

'To be sure, Philippe,' said the old fellow, 'we must see about it.'

At the introduction thus effected by Flore, Philippe bowed almost timidly to Gilet, who bowed too.

'Uncle, I have some pictures here to return to you. They are at Monsieur Hochon's. You will, I hope, do me the pleasure of coming to identify them some day or other.'

Having spoken these words in a dry tone, Lieutenant-Colonel Philippe Bridau went away.

His visit made a deeper impression on Flore's mind, and on Gilet's too, than mere dismay at the first sight of this dreadful old campaigner. As soon as Philippe had slammed the door with the violence of a supplanted heir, Flore and Gilet hid behind the curtains to watch him as he crossed over from his uncle's house to the Hochons'.

'What a blackguard!' said Flore, with a questioning glance at Gilet.

'Yes, unfortunately there were some men like that in the Emperor's armies; I settled seven of them on the hulks,' said Gilet.

'I hope that you will pick no quarrel with this one,' said Mademoiselle Brazier.

'That one!' retorted Max. 'He is a mangy dog,—but he would like a bone,' he added, addressing old Rouget. 'If his uncle will trust my opinion, he will get rid of him with a present; he will not leave you in peace, Papa Rouget.'

'He smelt of horrible tobacco,' said the old man.

'He smelt your money too,' said Flore in a peremptory tone. 'My opinion is that you should decline to receive him.'

'I am sure I am quite willing,' said the old man.

'Monsieur,' said Gritte, going into the room where the Hochon family were sitting after breakfast, 'here is that Monsieur Bridau you spoke about.'

Philippe entered with much politeness, in the midst of perfect silence, produced by general curiosity. Madame Hochon shuddered from head to foot on beholding the author of all Agathe's woes, and the cause of good old Madame Descoings' death. Adolphine, too, was unpleasantly startled; Baruch and François looked at each other with surprise. Old Hochon preserved his presence of mind, and offered Madame Bridau's son a seat.

'I have come,' said Philippe, 'to recommend myself to your good graces, for I have to arrange matters so as to live in this town for five years on sixty francs a month allowed me by France.'

'It can be done,' said Monsieur Hochon.

Philippe talked on indifferent subjects, and conducted himself perfectly well. He spoke of Lousteau the journalist, the old lady's nephew, as a perfect eagle, and her favour was completely won when she heard him declare that the name of Lousteau would be famous. Then he did not hesitate to confess the errors of his ways; in reply to a friendly reproof administered by Madame Hochon in an undertone, he said that he had thought much while in prison, and promised her to be quite another man for the future.

In response to a word from Philippe, Monsieur Hochon went out with him. When the miser and the soldier were on the Boulevard Baron, at a spot where no one could overhear them, the Colonel said—

'Monsieur, if you will take my word for it, we had better never discuss business or certain persons excepting when walking out in the country, or in places where

we can talk without being heard. Maître Desroches impressed upon me how great is the power of gossip in a small town. I do not wish that you should be suspected of helping me by your advice, though Desroches enjoined on me that I should ask it, and I beg you to give it me freely. We have a powerful enemy opposed to us; we must neglect no precaution that may enable us to defeat him. To begin with, excuse me if I call no more. A little distance between us will leave you clear of any suspicion of influencing my conduct. When I require to consult you, I will walk past your house at half-past nine, just as you are finishing breakfast. If you see me carrying my stick as we shoulder arms, that will convey to you that we are to meet by chance at some spot where we may walk, and which you will tell me of.'

'All that seems to me the idea of a prudent man who means to succeed,' said the old man.

'And I shall succeed, Monsieur. To begin with, can you tell me of any officers of the old army living here who are not allies of that Maxence Gilet, and with whom I may make acquaintance.'

'There is a Captain of the Artillery of the Guard, a Monsieur Mignonnet, who was cadet from the Ecole Polytechnique, a man of about forty, who lives quietly; he is a man of honour, and denounces Max, whose conduct seems to him unworthy of a soldier.'

'Good!' said Philippe.

'There are not many officers of that stamp,' Monsieur Hochon went on. 'I can think of no one else but a cavalry captain.'

'That was my corps,' said Philippe. 'Was he in the Guards?'

'Yes,' said Monsieur Hochon. 'In 1810 Carpentier was Quartermaster-General of the Dragoons; he left that regiment and entered the Line as second lieutenant, where he rose to be captain.'

'Giroudeau perhaps may know him,' thought Philippe.

'Monsieur Carpentier took the place at the Mairie which Maxence threw up, and he is a friend of Major Mignonnet's.'

'And what can I do here for my living?'

'I believe that an Insurance Company is about to be started for the Department of the Cher; you might find employment there, but it would not be more than fifty francs a month at the best.'

'That will do for me.'

By the end of the week Philippe had a new coat, waistcoat, and trousers of blue Elbeuf cloth, bought on credit for monthly payments; boots too, leather gloves, and a hat. Giroudeau sent him some linen from Paris, his weapons, and a letter of introduction to Carpentier, who had served under the former Captain of Dragoons. This letter secured to Philippe Carpentier's good offices, and he introduced him to Mignonnet as a man of the highest merit and noblest character. Philippe soon won the admiration of these two worthy officers by confiding to them some details of the conspiracy for which he had been tried; it had been, as every one knows, the last attempt of the old army to rebel against the Bourbons; for the case of the Sergeants of la Rochelle falls under another category.

After 1822 the soldiery, who had learnt a lesson from the fate of the conspiracy of August the 19th, 1820, and of Berton's and Caron's plots, made up their mind to await the turn of events. This last scheme, the younger sister of that of the 19th of August, was identically the same, but recomposed of better elements. Like the first, it was kept absolutely secret from the King's Government. The conspirators, once more found out, were clever enough to reduce a really far-reaching enterprise to the semblance of a mere petty barrack mutiny. The north of France was to be the scene of this conspiracy, in which several regiments of cavalry, artillery, and infantry were implicated. The frontier fortresses were to be all

seized at once by surprise. In the event of success, the treaties of 1815 were to be nullified by the immediate federation of Belgium, which was to be torn from the Holy Alliance as the outcome of a military compact among soldiers. Two thrones were at once to founder in this swift whirlwind.

Of this formidable scheme planned by clever heads, with which some Great Personages were mixed up, nothing came but a case for the Supreme Court. Philippe Bridau consented to screen his betters, who vanished at the moment when their plans were discovered—either by some treachery or by chance; and they, in their seats in the Chambers, had only promised their co-operation to crown success at the very heart of Government.

To relate the scheme which the confessions of the Liberals, in 1830, divulged in all its depth, and in its immense ramifications, unknown to the initiated of the baser class, would be to intrude on the domain of history, and would lead to too long a digression. This outline will suffice to explain the twofold part played by Philippe. The Emperor's staff-officer was to have led an outbreak in Paris, intended merely to mask the real conspiracy and to keep the Government busy at its centre, while the great movement took place in the north. Afterwards he was put forward to break the connection between the two plots by betraying only some unimportant secrets; his destitute appearance and broken health were admirably calculated to throw discredit and contempt on the enterprise in the eyes of the authorities. This part was well suited to the precarious position of this unprincipled gambler. Feeling that he had one foot in each party, the wily Philippe played the good apostle to the King's Government, and yet did not lose the esteem of men standing high in his own party; but he promised himself that at a future day he would follow up the line that might offer the greater advantages.

These revelations as to the vast extent of the real

conspiracy made Philippe a man of the highest importance in the eyes of Carpentier and Mignonnet, for his devotedness showed a political sense worthy of the best days of the Convention. Thus, in a few days, the cunning Bonapartist became the friend of these two men, whose respectability cast its reflection on him. By the recommendation of Monsieur Carpentier and Monsieur Mignonnet he at once got the appointment mentioned by Hochon in the Mutual Insurance Society of the Department of the Cher. His work was to keep the books, as in a tax-collector's office, to fill in printed circulars with names and numbers, and send them off, and to issue policies of insurance; thus he was not employed for more than three hours daily.

Mignonnet and Carpentier secured the admission of this visitor to Issoudun to their club, where his air and manners, quite in accordance with the high opinion these two officers had formed of this leader of conspiracies, gained him the respect which is paid to often deceptive appearances. Philippe, whose conduct was the result of much deliberation, had meditated in prison on the disadvantages of a dissolute life. He had not needed Desroches' lecture to perceive the necessity for conciliating the good opinion of the townspeople by honest, decent, and cleanly conduct. Delighted to cast reflections on Max by living as respectably as Mignonnet, he also wished to lull Max by deceiving him as to his character. He meant to be looked upon as a nincompoop, by affecting disinterested generosity while circumventing the enemy and aiming at his uncle's fortune; whereas his mother and his brother, who were really disinterested, generous, and magnanimous, had been accused of cunning while acting with artless simplicity.

Philippe's greed had been fired in proportion to his uncle's wealth, which Monsieur Hochon expatiated on in detail. In the first private conversation he had held

with this old man they had fully agreed that, above all things, Philippe must not rouse Max's suspicions; for all would be lost if Max and Flore carried off their victim, even to Bourges.

Once a week Colonel Bridau dined with Captain Mignonnet, another day with Carpentier, and every Thursday with Monsieur Hochon. He was soon invited to other houses, and by the end of three weeks had only his breakfast to pay for. He never mentioned his uncle, nor la Rabouilleuse, nor Gilet, unless it were to make some inquiry with reference to his mother's or Joseph's stay in the town. Finally, the three officers, the only men wearing the ribbon of the Legion of Honour—Philippe having the superior decoration of the rosette, which gave him a marked superiority in everybody's eyes, very noticeable in a country town—would take their daily walk together at the same hour before dinner, keeping themselves to themselves, to use a homely phrase.

This attitude, this reserve and calm demeanour, produced an excellent effect in Issoudun. Max's adherents all looked upon Philippe as a *sabreur*, a swashbuckler, an expression used by soldiers to attribute the coarsest kind of courage to a superior officer, while denying him the capacity for command.

'He is a very respectable man,' said the elder Goddet to Max.

'Pooh!' replied Captain Gilet, 'his behaviour before the Court shows him to be either a dupe or a spy; he is, as you say, fool enough to have been the dupe of those who were playing for high stakes.'

After getting his appointment, Philippe, aware of the gossip of the place, was anxious to conceal certain facts as far as possible from his neighbours' knowledge; he therefore took rooms in a house at the end of the Faubourg Saint-Paterne, with a very large garden attached. There, in perfect secrecy, he could practise sword-play with Carpentier, who had been instructor in

a regiment of foot before his promotion to the Imperial Guard. After having thus recovered his old superiority, Philippe learned from Carpentier certain secret tricks which would enable him to meet the most accomplished opponent without any fear. He next took to pistol practice with Mignonnet and Carpentier, for amusement, as he said, but in reality to lead Maxence to believe that, in the event of a duel, he relied on that weapon. Whenever Philippe met Gilet he expected him to salute, and replied by lifting the front of his hat with his finger in a cavalier fashion, as a colonel does to a private.

Maxence Gilet never gave any sign of annoyance or dissatisfaction; he never uttered a single word on the subject at la Cognette's, where he still had little suppers, though since Fario's knife-thrust the nocturnal pranks were for a time pretermitted. Still, at the end of a certain time, Lieutenant-Colonel Bridau's contempt for Major Gilet was a patent fact, and discussed by some of the Knights of Idlesse who were less closely attached to Maxence than were Baruch, François, and two or three more. It was a matter of general surprise to see Max the vehement and fiery behaving so meekly. No one at Issoudun, not even Potel or Renard, ventured to mention so delicate a matter to Gilet. Potel, really disturbed by such a public misunderstanding between two officers of the old guard, represented Max as quite capable of hatching some plot in which the Colonel might get the worst of it. By Potel's account some new pitfall might be expected, after what Max had done to be rid of the mother and brother—for the Fario affair was no longer a mystery. Monsieur Hochon had not failed to expose Gilet's atrocious game to all the wise heads of the town. Monsieur Mouilleron, too, the hero of a piece of town gossip, had confidentially revealed the name of Gilet's would-be murderer, if only to find out the causes of Fario's hatred of Max, so as to keep justice on the alert in case of further events. Thus, while discussing

the Colonel's attitude towards Max, and endeavouring to guess what might come of this antagonism, the town regarded them by anticipation as adversaries.

Philippe, who was anxiously investigating the details of his brother's arrest, and the antecedent history of Gilet and la Rabouilleuse, ended by forming a somewhat intimate alliance with Fario, who was his neighbour. After carefully studying the Spaniard, Philippe thought he might trust a man of his temper. Their hatred was so absolutely in unison that Fario placed himself at Philippe's service, and told him all he knew of the feats of the Knights of Idlesse. Philippe, on his part, promised that, if he should succeed in obtaining such influence over his uncle as Gilet now exerted, he would indemnify Fario for all his losses, and thus secured his fidelity. Maxence had therefore a formidable enemy to meet—some one who could talk to him, as they say in those parts. The town of Issoudun, excited by rumour, foresaw a struggle between these two men who, be it observed, held each other in utter contempt.

One morning, towards the end of November, Philippe, meeting Monsieur Hochon at noon in the Avenue de Frapesle, said to him—

'I have discovered that your grandsons Baruch and François are the intimate allies of Maxence Gilet. The young rogues take part at night in all the pranks played in the town. And so, through them, Maxence knew everything that went on in your house when my brother and mother were staying with you.'

'And what proof have you of anything so shocking?'

'I heard them talking at night as they came out of a tavern. Your two grandsons each owe Maxence a thousand crowns. The villain desired the poor boys to find out what our plans are. He reminded them that it was you who proposed to besiege my uncle through the

priesthood, and said that no one could advise me but you —for, happily, he regards me as a mere fighting-cock.'

'What! My grandchildren . . .'

'Watch them,' said Philippe; 'you will see them coming home to the Place Saint-Jean at two or three in the morning, as sodden as champagne-corks, and walking with Maxence.'

'So that is why the rascals are so abstemious!' said Monsieur Hochon.

'Fario told me something of their nocturnal habits,' said Philippe. 'But for him I should never have guessed it.—My uncle is evidently oppressed by the most horrible tyranny, to judge from the few words my Spaniard overheard Max saying to your boys. I suspect that Max and la Rabouilleuse have a plan for grabbing the State securities for fifty thousand francs a year and going off to be married I don't know where, after plucking that wing from the pigeon. It is high time to find out what is going on in my uncle's house; but I do not know how to set about it.'

'I will think it over,' said the old man.

Philippe and Monsieur Hochon then went opposite ways, seeing other people approaching.

Never, at any period of his life, had Jean-Jacques Rouget been so miserable as since his nephew Philippe's first visit. Flore, in great terror, had a presentiment of some danger hanging over Max. Tired of her master, and fearing that he would live to a great age, as her criminal practices had so little effect on him, she hit on the very simple plan of leaving the place and going to Paris to be married to Maxence, after extracting from Rouget the bonds bearing fifty thousand francs a year. The old fellow, warned not indeed by any care for his heirs, nor by personal avarice, but by his passion for Flore, refused to give her the securities, pointing out that he had left her everything. The unhappy man knew how devotedly she loved Maxence, and he foresaw

that she would desert him as soon as she should be rich enough to marry. When, after lavishing her tenderest coaxing, Flore found her request denied, she tried severity: she never spoke to her master, she sent Védie to wait upon him, and the woman one morning found the old man with his eyes red from having wept all night. For a week Père Rouget had his breakfast alone, and heaven knows how!

So, the day after his conversation with Monsieur Hochon, when Philippe paid his uncle a second visit, he found him much altered. Flore remained in the room near the old man, on whom she shed tender glances, speaking kindly to him, and playing the farce so well, that Philippe understood the dangers of the situation merely from the solicitude paraded for his benefit. Gilet, whose policy it was to avoid any collision with Philippe, did not appear. After studying Père Rouget and Flore with a keen eye, the Colonel decided on a bold stroke.

'Good-bye, my dear uncle,' he said, rising, so as to seem about to leave.

'Oh, do not go yet,' cried the old man, who was basking in Flore's pretended affection. 'Dine with us, Philippe.'

'I will, if you will first take an hour's walk with me.'

'Monsieur is very ailing,' said Mademoiselle Brazier. 'He would not go out driving just now,' she added, turning to the old man, and looking at him with the fixed gaze that sometimes quells a madman.

Philippe took Flore by the arm, made her look at him, and gazed at her just as fixedly as she had stared at her victim.

'Tell me, Mademoiselle,' said he, 'am I to infer that my uncle is not free to come for a walk alone with me.'

'Of course he is, Monsieur,' said Flore, who could hardly make any other reply.

'Well, then, come, uncle. Now, Mademoiselle, give him his hat and stick.'

'But, as a rule, he never goes out without me. Do you, Monsieur?'

'Yes, Philippe, yes; I always want her——'

'We had better go in the carriage,' said Flore.

'Yes, let us go in the carriage,' cried the old man in his anxiety to reconcile his two tyrants.

'Uncle, you will come for a walk, and with me, or I come here no more. For the town will be in the right: you are under Mademoiselle Flore Brazier's thumb.—My uncle loves you, well and good,' he went on, fixing a leaden eye on Flore. 'You do not love him—that too is quite in order. But that you should make the old man miserable? There we draw the line. Those who want to inherit a fortune must earn it.—Now, uncle, are you coming?'

Philippe saw an agony of hesitancy depicted on the face of the poor helpless creature, whose eyes wandered first to Flore and then to his nephew.

'So that is how it stands!' said the Colonel. 'Very good! Good-bye, uncle. As for you, Mademoiselle—your servant!'

He turned round quickly as he reached the door, and again detected a threatening gesture from Flore to his uncle.

'Uncle,' said he, 'if you will come for a walk with me, I will meet you at your door. I am going to Monsieur Hochon for ten minutes. . . . If you and I do not get our walk, I will back myself to send some people walking I could name.'

And Philippe crossed the avenue to call on the Hochons.

Any one can imagine the scene in the family which resulted from Philippe's revelation to Monsieur Hochon. At nine o'clock that morning old Monsieur Héron had made his appearance with a bundle of papers, and found a fire in the large room, lighted by the master's orders, quite against the general rule. Madame Hochon, dressed

at this unconscionable hour, was sitting in her armchair by the fire. The two grandsons, warned by Adolphine of a storm gathering over their heads since yesterday, had been ordered to stay at home. Having been summoned by Gritte, they were chilled by the paraphernalia of ceremony displayed by their grandparents, whose cold wrath had hung over them for the past twenty-four hours.

'Do not rise for them,' said the old man to Monsieur Héron. 'You see before you two wretches unworthy of forgiveness.'

'Oh! grandpapa!' said François.

'Silence,' said the solemn old man. 'I know all about your life at night and your intimacy with Monsieur Maxence Gilet; but you will not meet him again at la Cognette's at one in the morning, for you are not to go out of this house again till you set out for your respective destinations.—So you ruined Fario? You have many a time been within an ace of finding yourselves in a criminal court?—Be silent!' he exclaimed, seeing Baruch open his mouth. 'You both owe money to Monsieur Maxence, who for six years past has been supplying you with it for your debaucheries.—Listen, now, to the accounts of my guardianship; we will talk afterwards. You will see from these documents whether you can play tricks with me, play tricks on the family and the laws of family honour by betraying the secrets of the house, and repeating to Monsieur Maxence Gilet what is said and done in it! For a thousand crowns you play the spy! For ten thousand you would no doubt commit murder? Indeed, did you not almost kill Madame Bridau? for Monsieur Gilet knew full well that it was Fario who had stabbed him when he accused my guest Monsieur Joseph Bridau of the attempt. And when that gallows-bird committed such a crime, it was because he had learnt from you that Madame Agathe intended to remain here.—You, my grandsons, to play the spy for such a man! You, street-bullies! Did you not know that your worthy chief

already, in 1806, had caused the death of a poor young creature? I will have no assassins or robbers in my house. You will just pack up your things and go elsewhere to be hanged!'

The two young men were as white and rigid as plaster images.

'Begin, Monsieur Héron,' said the miser to the notary.

The old lawyer read out an account of Hochon's guardianship, whence it appeared that the entire unencumbered fortune of the two Borniche children amounted to seventy thousand francs, the money settled on their mother; but Monsieur Hochon had lent his daughter considerable sums, and, as representing the lenders, had a lien on part of his grandchildren's fortune. The share remaining to Baruch came to twenty thousand francs.

'There, you are a rich man,' said his grandfather. 'Take your money and walk alone! I remain free to bestow my wealth and Madame Hochon's—for she agrees with me on every point in this matter—on whomsoever I please, on our dear Adolphine. Yes, she shall marry a peer's son if we choose, for she will have all we possess!'

'And a very fine fortune it is,' added Monsieur Héron.

'Monsieur Maxence Gilet will indemnify you!' said Madame Hochon.

'I see myself scraping twenty sous pieces together for such a couple of ne'er-do-weels!' exclaimed Monsieur Hochon.

'Forgive me,' stammered Baruch.

'*Forgive me this once, and never no more*,' repeated the old man, mocking the voice of a child. 'Yes, and if I forgive you, off you go to Monsieur Maxence to tell him what has befallen you and put him on his guard. . . . No, no, my little gentlemen. I shall have means of knowing how you conduct yourselves. As you behave, I shall behave. It is not by the good conduct of a day or of a month that I shall judge you, but by that of many years. I am strong on my feet, hale and hearty. I

hope to live long enough yet to see which way you go.—You, the capitalist,' he added to Baruch, 'will go to Paris to study banking with Monsieur Mongenod. Woe to you there if you do not walk straight: they will keep an eye on you. Your money is in the hands of Mongenod & Sons; here is a cheque on them for the whole sum. So now release me by signing your account, which is closed by a receipt in full,' said he, taking the paper out of Héron's hands and giving it to Baruch.

'As for you, François Hochon, you owe me money instead of having any to receive,' said the old man, addressing his other grandson. 'Monsieur Héron, will you read him his statement; it is clear—quite clear.'

The reading took place in utter silence.

'I am sending you to Poitiers, with six hundred francs a year, to study law,' said his grandfather, when the notary ended. 'I was prepared to make life easy for you; now you must become an advocate to make your living. Ah, ha! my young rascals, for six years you have taken me in! Well, it took me just an hour in my turn to overtake you. I have seven-league boots!'

Just as old Monsieur Héron was leaving, carrying with him the signed releases, Gritte announced Monsieur le Colonel Philippe Bridau. Madame Hochon left the room, taking her grandsons with her 'to the confessional,' as old Hochon expressed it, and to ascertain what effect this scene had had on them.

Philippe and the old man went to the window and talked in low tones.

'I have been considering the position of your affairs,' said Monsieur Hochon, looking across to the house opposite. 'I have just been talking them over with Monsieur Héron. The bond bearing fifty thousand francs interest can only be sold by the holder himself, or by his order. Now, since you came, your uncle has signed no such order in any lawyer's office; and as

he has not been out of Issoudun, he has signed none elsewhere. If he gave any one a power of attorney in this place, we should know of it at once; if he did it elsewhere, we should hear of it all the same, for it would have to be stamped, and our good Monsieur Héron has means of information. So if the old man should go out of the town, follow him, find out where he has been, and we will take steps to discover what he has done.'

'The power has not been given,' said Philippe. 'They are trying for it, but I hope to prevent its being executed. No, it will *not* be executed!' cried Philippe, seeing his uncle appear on his doorstep. He pointed him out to Monsieur Hochon, and hastily told him of the events—so trivial and so important—of his visit to Rouget. 'Maxence is afraid of me,' he added, 'but he cannot keep out of my way. Mignonnet tells me that all the officers of the old army keep high festival at Issoudun every year on the anniversary of the Emperor's coronation. Well, then, two days hence Max and I must meet.'

'If he can get the power of attorney by the morning of the 1st of December, he will be off to Paris by the mail, and leave the anniversary to take care of itself.'

'True; then I must get hold of my uncle; but I have an eye that settles idiots,' said Philippe, making Monsieur Hochon quail under a villainous glare.

'If they are allowing him to walk out with you, Maxence has no doubt hit on some other plan for winning the game,' said the old miser.

'Oh! Fario is on the watch,' replied Philippe, 'and not only he. The Spaniard discovered for me, in the neighbourhood of Vatan, one of my old soldiers to whom I once did a service. No one suspects that Benjamin Bourdet is at the Spaniard's orders, and Fario has placed one of his horses at Benjamin's service.'

'If you were to kill the monster who perverted my grandsons, you would be really doing a good action.'

'By this time, thanks to me, all Issoudun knows what Monsieur Maxence has been at by night for these six years past,' replied Philippe, 'and tongues are wagging about him pretty freely. Morally he is a ruined man.'

The moment Philippe had left his uncle, Flore went to Max's room to relate to him the smallest details of the visit paid by this audacious nephew.

'What is to be done?' said she.

'Before having recourse to extreme measures, which would be a duel with that long corpse of a man,' replied Maxence, 'we must play for double or quits by a daring stroke. Let the old simpleton go out with his nephew.'

'But that great hound does not beat about the bush,' cried Flore; 'he will call a spade a spade.'

'Just attend to me,' said Maxence, in his most strident tones. 'Do you suppose that I have not listened at doors and considered our position? Send to old Cognet for a conveyance and a horse, now, this minute! All must be done in five minutes. Put all that is yours into the cart, take Védie, and be off to Vatan; take the twenty thousand francs he has in his desk. If I bring the old boy to Vatan, do not consent to return here till he has signed the power of attorney. Then I will sneak off to Paris while you come back to Issoudun.—When Jean-Jacques comes in from his walk and finds that you are gone, he will lose his head and want to run after you. Very good—and I will talk to him then!'

While this plot was being laid, Philippe, arm in arm with his uncle, had taken him for a walk on the Boulevard Baron.

'There are two great schemers at loggerheads,' said old Hochon to himself, watching the Colonel supporting his uncle. 'I am curious to see the end of this game, where the stake is ninety thousand francs a year.'

'My dear uncle,' said Philippe, whose phraseology had some flavour of his Paris associates, 'you are in love with that minx, and you show devilish good taste, for she is a stunning armful. Instead of cosseting you, she makes you trot round like her footman—and that again is natural enough; she would like to see you six feet under the daisies to marry Maxence, whom she worships——'

'Yes, Philippe, I know all that, but I love her all the same.'

'Well, I have sworn by my mother's body—and she is your sister, sure enough,' Philippe went on,—'to make your Rabouilleuse as pliant as my glove, and just what she must have been before that blackguard, who is unworthy ever to have served in the Imperial Guard, came sponging on your household——'

'Oh! if you could only do that!' said the old man.

'It is easy enough,' replied Philippe, cutting him short. 'I will kill Maxence like a dog—but—on one condition.'

'What is that?' asked old Rouget, looking at his nephew with a blank expression.

'Do not sign the power of attorney they are asking for before the 3rd of December; drag on only till then. Those two vultures want your licence to sell out your stock for fifty thousand francs a year, solely to go and get married in Paris, and there have a high time with your million.'

'I am very much afraid of it,' said Rouget.

'Well, then, whatever they may do to you, put off signing it till next week.'

'Yes, but when Flore talks to me she upsets me so that it turns my brain. I tell you, she has a way of looking at me that makes her blue eyes seem like Paradise, and I am no longer my own master, particularly as there are days when she leaves me in disgrace.'

'Well, if she is all honey, just be satisfied to promise her the document, and give me notice the day before

you sign it. Maxence will never be your representative —unless he has killed me. If I kill him, you may take me to live with you in his place, and I will make your beauty dance at a word or a look. Yes, Flore shall be fond of you, or, by God, if she vexes you, I will give her a hiding.'

'Oh! that I would never allow. A blow to Flore would fall on my heart.'

'And yet it is the only way to train a woman or a horse. A man who makes himself feared is loved and obeyed. This is all I wanted to say in your private ear. —Good morning, gentlemen,' said he to Mignonnet and Carpentier. 'I am taking my uncle for a little walk you see, and trying to teach him; for we live in an age when the young people are obliged to educate their grandparents.'

Greetings were exchanged.

'You behold in my dear uncle the results of an unfortunate passion,' the Colonel went on. 'He is about to be despoiled of his fortune and left stripped like Baba—you know to whom I allude. The good man knows of the plot, but he cannot make up his mind to do without his Nanna for a few days to baffle her,' and Philippe frankly explained the position in which his uncle stood.

'You see, gentlemen,' said he in conclusion, 'that there are not two ways of setting my uncle free. Colonel Bridau must kill Major Gilet, or Major Gilet must kill Colonel Bridau. The day after to-morrow is the anniversary of the Emperor's coronation; I count on you so to arrange the seats at the banquet that I may be opposite to Major Gilet. You will, I hope, do me the honour to act as my seconds.'

'We will put you in the chair and sit on each side of you. Max, as vice-president, will be opposite to you,' said Mignonnet.

'Oh, the scoundrel will have Major Potel and Captain Renard for his seconds,' said Carpentier. 'In spite of all

that is rumoured in the town about his nocturnal excursions, those two capital fellows have stood by him before now; they will be faithful to him——'

'You see, uncle, how well the pot is simmering,' said Philippe. 'Sign nothing before the 3rd, for, by the day after, you shall be free, happy, adored by Flore, and rid of your finance minister.'

'You do not know him, nephew,' exclaimed Rouget in dismay. 'Max has killed nine men in duels.'

'Yes, but he was not robbing them of a hundred thousand francs a year,' replied Philippe.

'A bad conscience spoils a man's hand,' said Mignonnet sententiously.

'Within a few days,' said Philippe, 'you and la Rabouilleuse will be living together like hearts *à la fleur d'orange*, as soon as she has got over her grief; for she will wriggle like a worm, and yelp, and melt into tears; but let the tap run!'

The two officers supported Philippe's arguments, and tried their utmost to put some heart into Père Rouget, with whom they walked for about two hours. At last Philippe escorted his uncle home, saying as his last word: 'Come to no decision without consulting me. I know what women are. I paid for one more dearly than Flore will ever cost you. And she taught me how to manage the fair sex for the rest of my days. Women are just naughty children; they are inferior animals to men; we must make them afraid of us, for our worst fate is to be led by the nose by those little brutes!'

It was about two in the afternoon when the old man went in. Kouski opened the door to him, in tears, or, at any rate, in obedience to Maxence's orders, seeming to weep.

'What is the matter?' asked Jean-Jacques.

'Oh, Monsieur! Madame is gone away with Védie.'

'Go-o-one?' said the old man, in a voice of anguish.

The blow was so tremendous, that Rouget sat down on one of the steps of the stairs. A moment after, he rose, looked in the sitting-room, in the kitchen, went up to his own room, walked through all the bedrooms, came back into the sitting-room, sank into an armchair, and burst into tears.

'Where is she?' he cried, in the midst of sobs. 'Where is she? Where is Max?'

'I do not know,' replied Kouski. 'The Major went out without saying a word.'

Gilet, very astutely, had thought it diplomatic to wander round the town. By leaving the old man alone in his despair, he made him feel how deserted he was, and so made him amenable to his counsels. But to hinder Philippe from supporting his uncle at this crisis, Max had desired Kouski to let no one into the house. Flore being away, the old man had neither bit or bridle, and the situation was excessively critical.

During his walk through the town Max saw himself avoided by many persons who, only the day before, would have been most eager to come and shake hands with him. There was a general reaction against him. The feats of the Knights of Idlesse were on every tongue. The story of Joseph Bridau's arrest, which was now explained, cast dishonour on Max, whose life and deeds had, in this one day, met with their due reward. Gilet met Major Potel, who was looking for him, and who was quite beside himself.

'What is wrong, Potel?'

'My dear fellow, the Imperial Guard is blackguarded all through the town! The very clerks are abusing you, and that rebounds on me, and goes to my heart.'

'What are they complaining of?' asked Max.

'Of the tricks you played at night.'

'As if a little amusement were forbidden——'

'Oh! that is nothing,' said Potel.

Potel was an officer of the stamp of those who said to a burgomaster, 'Pooh! if we burn your town, we will pay for it!' so he was not much concerned by the pranks of the Order.

'What else?' said Gilet.

'The Guard is divided against itself! That is what breaks my heart. It is Bridau who has unchained the town against you. The Guard against the Guard? No; that is all wrong. You cannot retreat, Max; you must meet Bridau. I declare I longed to pick a quarrel with that great scoundrel, and settle him out of hand; then these black coats would not have seen the Guard against the Guard. In war I say nothing against it; two brave fellows have a squabble, they fight it out, and there are no counter-jumpers by to laugh them to scorn.—No, that long rascal never was in the Guards. A man of the Guard ought not to behave so before all these townsfolk against another man of the Guard. Oh! the Guard is scoffed at, and at Issoudun too, where it used to be respected!'

'Come, Potel, do not fuss over nothing,' said Max. 'Even if you should not see me at the anniversary dinner——'

'What! you are not coming to Lacroix's the day after to-morrow?' cried Potel, interrupting his friend. 'Why, you will be called a coward; you will seem to be keeping out of Bridau's way! No, no. The foot grenadiers of the Guard must not retreat before the dragoons of the Guard! Arrange your other business as you will, but be there!'

'One more to send to the shades?' said Max. 'Come, I think I can manage my business and be there too.—For,' said he to himself, 'the power of attorney must not be made out to me. As old Héron said, that would look too much like robbery.'

The lion, thus entangled in the net laid for him by Philippe Bridau, set his teeth with an inward quiver; he

avoided the eye of the persons he met, and went home by the Boulevard Villate, muttering as he walked. 'Before I fight I will get those securities,' said he to himself. 'If I fall, that money, at any rate, shall not go to that Philippe. I will have it placed in Flore's name. By my advice the child must go straight to Paris; and there, if she likes, she may marry the son of some marshal who has had the sack. I will have the power of attorney made out to Baruch, who will not transfer the stock without my orders.'

We must do Max the justice to say that he never looked calmer than when his blood and brain were seething. Never in any soldier were the qualities that make a great general combined in a higher degree. If he had not been checked in his career by being taken prisoner, the Emperor would have found in this fellow a man of the sort needful to a vast enterprise.

On going into the room where the victim of all these tragi-comic scenes still sat sobbing, Max inquired the cause of his despair; he was greatly astonished; he knew nothing; he heard, with well-acted surprise, of Flore's departure, and cross-questioned Kouski to throw some light on the purpose of this unaccountable journey.

'Madame just said this,' said Kouski; 'I was to tell Monsieur that she had taken the twenty thousand francs in gold that were in his desk, thinking that Monsieur would not grudge it her as wages for these two-and-twenty years.'

'As wages?' said Rouget.

'Yes,' said Kouski. '"Oh, I shall never come back!" She went away saying so to Védie—for poor Védie, who is greatly attached to Monsieur, was putting it to Madame. "No, no," says she, "he has not the least affection for me; he let his nephew treat me like the scum of the earth!" and she was crying too—ever so!'

'What do I care for Philippe!' cried the old man,

whom Max was watching. 'Where is Flore? How can we find out where she is?'

'Philippe, whose advice you are so ready to take, will help you,' said Maxence coldly.

'Philippe?' said the old man; 'what can he do with the poor child? There is no one but you, my good Max, who can find Flore; she will come with you; you will bring her back to me.'

'I do not wish to find myself in antagonism with Monsieur Bridau,' said Max.

'By Heaven!' cried Rouget, 'if that is all—he has promised me that he will kill you.'

'Ah, ha!' laughed Gilet, 'we will see——'

'My dear fellow,' said the old man, 'find Flore; tell her I will do whatever she wishes——'

'She must have been seen passing by somewhere in the town,' said Maxence to Kouski. 'Serve dinner, put everything on the table, and then go from place to place, making inquiries, and tell us at dessert what road Mademoiselle Brazier has taken.'

This order soothed the poor man for a minute; for he was whimpering like a child that has lost its nurse. At this moment Max, whom Rouget hated as the cause of all his misfortunes, appeared to him as an angel. A passion like Rouget's for Flore is strangely like a child's. At six o'clock the Pole, who had simply taken a walk, came in and announced that Flore had set out for Vatan.

'Madame is gone back to her native place, that is clear,' said Kouski.

'Will you come to Vatan this evening?' asked Max of the old man. 'The road is bad, but Kouski drives well, and you will make up your quarrel better at eight o'clock this evening than to-morrow morning.'

'Let us be off,' cried Rouget.

'Put the horse in very quietly, and try to prevent the town hearing all about this foolish business, for Monsieur

Rouget's dignity,' said Max. 'Saddle my horse, and I will ride ahead,' he added in Kouski's ear.

Monsieur Hochon had already sent news of Mademoiselle Brazier's departure to Philippe Bridau, who rose from table at Monsieur Mignonnet's to hurry back to the Place Saint-Jean, for he guessed at once the purpose of this skilful strategy. When Philippe went to his uncle's door Kouski called to him out of a first-floor window that Monsieur Rouget could receive no one.

'Fario,' said he to the Spaniard, who was walking in the Grande Narette, 'go and tell Benjamin to set out on horseback; I must positively know where my uncle and Maxence are going.'

'They are putting the horse to the barouche,' said Fario, who had been watching Rouget's house.

'If they start for Vatan,' replied Philippe, 'find a second horse for me, and return with Benjamin to Monsieur Mignonnet's house.'

'What do you propose doing?' asked Monsieur Hochon, who came out of his house on seeing Philippe and Fario on the Place.

'A general's skill, my dear Monsieur Hochon, consists not merely in keeping a sharp look-out on the enemy's movements, but also in guessing his intentions from his movements, and constantly modifying his own plan as fast as the foe upsets it by some unexpected tactics. Look here; if my uncle and Maxence go out together in the chaise, they are going to Vatan; Maxence will have promised to reconcile him to Flore, who *fugit ad salices*—for this manœuvre is General Virgil's. If this is their game, I don't know what I shall do. But I have the night before me, for my uncle cannot sign a power of attorney at ten o'clock at night; notaries are in bed.

'If, as the pawing of a second horse suggests to me, Max is going ahead to give Flore her instructions before she sees my uncle—as seems necessary and probable

—the rascal is done for! You will see how we play a return match in the game of inheritance, we soldiers. And since, for this last hand in the game, I need an assistant, I am going back to Mignonnet's to make arrangements with my friend Carpentier.'

After shaking hands with Monsieur Hochon, Philippe went down the Petite Narette to see Major Mignonnet. Ten minutes later, Monsieur Hochon saw Maxence set out at a hard gallop; and being curious, as old men are, he was so much interested that he remained standing at the window waiting to hear the rattle of the *demi-fortune*, which was soon audible. Rouget's impatience brought him out twenty minutes after Max. Kouski, in obedience to his real master, was driving slowly—at any rate, in the town.

'If they get off to Paris, all is lost!' said Monsieur Hochon to himself.

At this moment a little boy from the Roman suburb came to Monsieur Hochon's door; he had a letter for Baruch. The old man's two grandsons, very humble since the morning, had of their own accord stayed at home. Reflecting on the future, they well understood how wise they would be to humour their grandparents. Baruch could not but know how great his grandfather Hochon's influence would be over his grandfather and grandmother Borniche; Monsieur Hochon would not fail to secure the lion's share of all their money to Adolphine if his conduct should justify them in founding their hopes on such a grand marriage as they had threatened him with that morning. Baruch, being much richer than François, had much to lose; so he was in favour of complete submission, making no conditions but that his debt to Max should be paid.

François' prospects were entirely in his grandfather's hands; he had no fortune to look for but from him, since, from the account of his guardianship, the youth was his debtor. So the two young men made solemn

promises, their repentance being stimulated by their damaged prospects, and Madame Hochon had reassured them as to the money they owed to Maxence.

'You have played the fool!' said she. 'Repair the mischief by good conduct, and Monsieur Hochon will be mollified.'

Thus, when François had read the letter over Baruch's shoulder, he said in his ear—

'Ask grandpapa what he thinks of it.'

'Here,' said Baruch, handing the letter to the old man.

'Read it to me; I have not got my spectacles.'

'My dear Friend,—

'I hope you will not hesitate, in the serious position in which I am placed, to do me a service by accepting the office of Monsieur Rouget's attorney. Pray be at Vatan by nine o'clock to-morrow. I shall no doubt send you to Paris; but be quite easy, I will give you money for the journey, and join you ere long, for I am almost certain to be obliged to leave Issoudun on the 3rd of December. Adieu; I rely on your friendship, and you may rely on mine. Maxence.'

'God be praised!' said Monsieur Hochon, 'that idiot's fortune is safe from the clutches of those devils!'

'It must be so, since you say it,' observed Madame Hochon, 'and I thank God for it; He no doubt has heard my prayers. The triumph of the wicked is always brief.'

'Go to Vatan, and accept the office of attorney to Monsieur Rouget,' said the old man to Baruch. 'You will be desired to transfer stock bearing fifty thousand francs interest to the name of Mademoiselle Brazier. Set out for Paris, but stop at Orleans, and wait till you hear from me. Tell no one whatever where you put up, and go to the last inn you see in the Faubourg Bannier, even if it is but a carrier's house of call.'

'Hey day!' cried François, who had rushed to the

window at the sound of carriage-wheels in the Grande Narette; 'here is something new! Père Rouget and Monsieur Philippe have come home together in the carriage, Benjamin and Monsieur Carpentier following them on horseback——'

'I will go across,' cried Monsieur Hochon, his curiosity getting the upper hand of every other feeling.

Monsieur Hochon found old Rouget in his room, writing the following letter from his nephew's dictation:—

'MADEMOISELLE,—

'If you do not set out the instant you receive this letter to return to me, your conduct will show so much ingratitude for all my kindness, that I shall revoke my will in your favour, and leave my whole fortune to my nephew Philippe. You must also understand that if Monsieur Gilet is with you at Vatan, he can never again live under my roof. I intrust this letter to Monsieur Carpentier to be delivered to you, and I hope you will listen to his advice, for he will speak to you as I should myself.

'Yours affectionately,

'J.-J. ROUGET.'

'Captain Carpentier and I happened to meet my uncle,' said Philippe to Monsieur Hochon with bitter irony. 'He was so foolish as to intend going to Vatan to seek Mademoiselle Brazier and Major Gilet. I explained to my uncle that he was running head foremost into a trap. Will not that woman throw him over as soon as he shall have signed the power of attorney she insists on to enable her to transfer to herself the stock for fifty thousand francs a year? By writing this letter, will he not see her back here to-night, under his roof—the fair deserter! I promise I will make Mademoiselle as pliant as a reed for the rest of her life, if only my uncle will allow me to take the place of Monsieur Gilet, who, in my opinion, is certainly not in the right place here. Am I not right?—And my uncle wrings his hands!'

'My good neighbour,' said Monsieur Hochon, 'you have taken the best means for securing peace in your house. If you will listen to me, you will destroy your will, and then you will see Flore once more all that she was in former days.'

'No; she will never forgive me for making her so unhappy,' said the old man, weeping; 'she will never love me again.'

'Yes, she will love you, and heartily too,' said Philippe. 'I will see to that.'

'But open your eyes, man!' said Monsieur Hochon to Rouget. 'They only want to rob you and desert you!'

'Oh, if I were only sure of that!' said the poor creature.

'Look here. This is a letter written by Maxence to my grandson Borniche,' said old Hochon. 'Read it.'

'The wretch!' exclaimed Carpentier, as he heard the letter which Rouget read through his tears.

'Is that clear enough, uncle?' asked Philippe. 'I tell you, bind the minx to you by interest and you will be adored—as you can be—half thread and half cotton!'

'She is too fond of Maxence; she will throw me over!' said the old man piteously.

'I tell you, uncle, by the day after to-morrow either I or Maxence will have ceased to leave our tracks on the streets of Issoudun——'

'Well,' said the poor fellow, 'go, Monsieur Carpentier; if you promise me that she will come back, go. You are a man to be depended on; say to her all you think fit in my name.'

'Captain Carpentier will whisper in her ear that I am having a lady here from Paris who is a little gem of youth and beauty,' said Philippe, 'and the minx will come back as fast as she can drive.'

The Captain set out, driving himself in the old chaise; Benjamin accompanied him on horseback, for Kouski was not to be found. Though the two officers had threatened him with an action and the loss of his place,

the Pole had fled to Vatan on a hired horse, to warn Maxence and Flore of their adversary's bold game.

Carpentier, who did not choose to return with la Rabouilleuse, was to ride back on Benjamin's horse when he had carried out his mission.

On hearing of Kouski's desertion, Philippe said to Benjamin—

'You can take his place here this evening. Try to climb up at the back of the chaise without being seen by Flore, so as to be here by the time she is.'

'Things are shaping! Daddy Hochon!' said the Colonel. 'There will be fun at the banquet the day after to-morrow.'

'And you will settle yourself here,' said the old miser.

'I have told Fario to send in all my things. I shall sleep in the room that opens on to the same landing as Gilet's; my uncle agrees.'

'Oh! what will come of all this?' cried the old man in dismay.

'Mademoiselle Flore Brazier will come of it, within a few hours, as mild as a Paschal lamb,' replied Monsieur Hochon.

'God grant it!' said Jean-Jacques, drying away his tears.

'It is now seven o'clock,' said Philippe. 'The queen of your heart will be here by about half-past eleven. You will see no more of Gilet; will you not be as happy as a Pope?—If you want me to succeed,' Philippe added in Monsieur Hochon's ear, 'remain with us till that she-ape comes; you will help me to keep the old fellow at the sticking-point; and then, between us, we can make Mademoiselle la Rabouilleuse understand where her true interests lie.'

Monsieur Hochon kept Philippe company, seeing that there was sense in his request; but they both had their hands full, for Père Rouget gave himself up to childish

lamentations, which were not checked by the arguments Philippe repeated ten times over—

'Well, uncle, if Flore comes back and is affectionate to you, you will admit that I am right. You will be made much of; you will keep your income; you will be guided for the future by my advice, and all will go on like Paradise.'

When at half-past eleven the sound of wheels was heard in the Grande Narette, the question was whether the carriage had returned empty or full. Rouget's face wore an expression of indescribable anguish, which gave way to the reaction of excessive joy when, as the chaise turned to come in, he saw in it the two women.

'Kouski,' said Philippe, giving his hand to Flore to get out, 'you are dismissed from Monsieur Rouget's service. You are not to sleep here to-night, so pack your things; Benjamin here will fill your place.'

'So you are master?' said Flore, with a sneer.

'By your leave!' retorted Philippe, holding Flore's hand as in a vice. 'Come with me; we have to *rabouiller* our hearts, you and I.'

Philippe led the woman, dumbfounded, out a few yards on to the Place Saint-Jean.

'Now, my beauty; the day after to-morrow Gilet will be sent to the shades below by this right arm,' said the officer, holding it out, 'or he will have caught me off my guard. If I fall, you will be the mistress in my uncle's house—*bene sit!* If I am left standing on my pegs, you have got to keep him in happiness of the very first quality. Otherwise, I know plenty of *Rabouilleuses* in Paris, prettier than you, without any injustice to you, for they are but seventeen; they would make my uncle very happy, and not fail to take my part. Begin your task this very evening, for if the old man is not as lively as a chaffinch to-morrow, I have only one thing to say to you—and mark my words—There is only one way of killing a man without the law having a word to say to it, and that is

by fighting a duel; but when it comes to a woman—I know three ways of getting rid of her. There, my pigeon!'

All through this address Flore had been shaking like an ague-patient.

'Kill Max——?' she said, looking at Philippe in the moonlight.

'Now, go. See, here is my uncle . . .'

In fact, old Rouget, in spite of all that Monsieur Hochon could say, had come out into the street to take Flore by the hand, as a miser might have sought his treasure. He led her into the house and into his room, and locked the door.

'This is good Saint-Lambert's Day, those who leave must stay away,' said Benjamin to the Pole.

'Oh, my master will shut all your mouths,' retorted Kouski, going off to join Max, who put up at the Hotel de la Poste.

Next day, from nine till eleven, all the women were gossiping at the house-doors. All through the town nothing was talked of but the wonderful revolution carried out the day before in Père Rouget's household. The upshot of these discussions was everywhere the same.

'What will happen between Max and Colonel Bridau at the Anniversary banquet to-morrow?'

To Védie, Philippe spoke a few words—'An annuity of six hundred francs—or dismissal!' which reduced her to neutrality for the time between two such formidable powers as Philippe and Flore.

Knowing Max's life to be imperilled, Flore was sweeter to old Rouget than even in the early days of their housekeeping. Alas! in love affairs, interested fraud overrides sincerity, and that is why so many men pay clever beguilers so dear. La Rabouilleuse remained invisible next morning till breakfast time, when she came down, giving her arm to Père Rouget. The tears rose to her

eyes as she saw in Max's seat the terrible veteran with his gloomy blue eye and ominously calm face.

'What ails you, Mademoiselle?' said he, after wishing his uncle good-morning.

'What ails her, nephew, is that she cannot bear the idea of your fighting Major Gilet——'

'I have not the slightest wish to kill your Gilet,' replied Philippe. 'He has only to clear out of Issoudun and ship himself to America with a parcel of merchandise; I should be the first to advise you to give him some money to invest in the best class of goods, and to wish him good luck! He will make a fortune, and it would be more creditable than running riot through the town o' nights—not to mention playing the devil in your house.'

'Well, that is very handsome, eh!' said Rouget, turning to Flore.

'To A-me-ri-ca!' said she, sobbing.

'He would be better off kicking his heels in New York than tucked up in a deal box in France. But, of course, you may say he is a crack hand; he may kill me!' remarked the Colonel.

'Will you allow me to speak to him?' said Flore, in a quite humble and submissive tone, to Philippe.

'Certainly, and he may come and take away all his things. But I shall stay with my uncle meanwhile; for I do not intend to leave the old man any more,' replied Philippe.

'Védie,' called Flore, 'run to the Poste, woman, and tell the Major that I beg him to——'

'To come and fetch away his things,' said Philippe, interrupting Flore.

'Yes, yes, Védie. That will be the best excuse for asking him to come; I want to speak to him.'

Fear so completely overpowered hatred in this woman, and her dismay at meeting a strong and ruthless will, when hitherto she had always met with adulation, was so

great, that she was beginning to give way before Philippe, as poor old Rouget had given way before her. She awaited with anxiety Védie's return; but Védie came back with a positive refusal from Max, who begged Mademoiselle Brazier to send all his possessions to the Hotel de la Poste.

'Will you let me take them to him?' she asked old Rouget.

'Yes—but you promise to come back?' said the old man.

'If Mademoiselle is not here by mid-day, at one o'clock you will give me a power of attorney to transfer your securities,' said Philippe, looking at Flore. 'Take Védie for the sake of appearances, Mademoiselle. Henceforth we must guard my uncle's honour.'

Flore could get nothing out of Maxence. The Major, in his disgust at having allowed himself to be ousted from his disgraceful position before the eyes of the whole town, was too proud to retreat before Philippe. La Rabouilleuse combated his arguments by proposing to her lover that they should fly together to America; but Gilet, who did not want Flore without Père Rouget's fortune, while he would not let the woman see to the bottom of his heart, persisted in saying that he meant to kill Philippe.

'We have committed a stupid blunder,' said he. 'We ought to have gone, all three of us, to spend the winter in Paris. But how could we imagine from looking at that gaunt carcass that things would turn out as they have done? Events have come with such a rush, that it has turned my brain. I took the Colonel for a swashbuckler without two ideas; that was my mistake. Since I was not sharp enough in the first instance to double like a hare, I should be a coward now if I yielded an inch to the Colonel; he has ruined me in the opinion of the town; only his death can rehabilitate me.'

'Go to America with forty thousand francs. I will

find some way of getting rid of that savage; I will join you there; it will be much wiser . . .'

'What would people think of me?' he exclaimed, stung by the thought of the 'jaw.' 'No. Besides, I have already settled nine. That fellow can be no great duellist, it seems to me. He left school to go into the army; he was always in the wars till 1815, since that he has been travelling in America; so my bull-dog can never have set foot in a fencing school, while I have no match at sword-play. The cavalry sword is his arm; I shall seem magnanimous by proposing it—for I shall try to make him insult me, and I will make short work of him. Decidedly that is the best thing to do. Be easy; we shall be masters again the day after to-morrow.'

Thus with Max a foolish point of honour outweighed rational policy. Flore was at home by one o'clock, and shut herself into her room to cry at her ease. All that day gossip wagged its tongue freely in Issoudun, for a duel between Maxence and Philippe was considered inevitable.

'Ah! Monsieur Hochon,' said Mignonnet, who met the old man on the Boulevard Baron, where the Captain was walking with Carpentier, 'we are very anxious, for Gilet is equally strong with all weapons.'

'Never mind,' said the old provincial diplomate, 'Philippe has managed the whole business very well—and I never should have believed that that long, free-and-easy rascal would have succeeded so quickly. Those two fellows rolled up to meet each other like two storm-clouds——'

'Oh,' said Carpentier, 'Philippe is a very deep customer. His conduct before the Supreme Court was a masterpiece of skill.'

'Hallo! Captain Renard,' said a townsman, 'they say that wolves do not eat each other, but it seems that Max is going to try a ripping match with Colonel Bridau. It will be no child's play between men of the old Guard!'

'And you can laugh at it, you townsmen. Because the poor fellow liked a lark at night, you owe him a grudge,' said Major Potel. 'But Gilet is a man who could never stay in such a hole as Issoudun without finding something to do.'

'Well, well, gentlemen,' said another, 'Max and the Colonel have played the game out. Was not the Colonel bound to avenge his brother Joseph? Do you remember Max's treachery towards that poor fellow?'

'Bah! an artist!' said Renard.

'But Père Rouget's leavings are in the balance. They say that Monsieur Gilet was about to pounce on fifty thousand francs a year when the Colonel went to live under his uncle's roof.'

'Gilet—steal anybody's money?—Look here, Monsieur Canivet, do not say that anywhere but here, or we will make you eat your words without any sauce to them.'

But worthy Colonel Bridau had the good wishes of all the townspeople.

On the morrow, at about four o'clock, the officers of the Imperial army who resided at Issoudun, or in the neighbourhood, were walking to and fro on the market-place, in front of an eating-house kept by one Lacroix, waiting for Philippe Bridau. The banquet in honour of the anniversary of the Coronation was fixed for five o'clock, military time. Several groups were discussing Maxence's affairs and his eviction from Rouget's house, for the private soldiers had also agreed to hold a meeting at a tavern on the Place. Of all the officers, Potel and Renard alone attempted to defend their friend.

'Is it our part to interfere in what goes on between two heirs?' said Renard.

'Max is soft to women,' remarked Potel the cynic.

'Swords will be drawn before long,' said a retired sub-lieutenant, who now cultivated a market-garden in the upper Baltan. 'Though Monsieur Maxence was a fool

to go to live with Père Rouget, he would be a coward to take his dismissal like a servant without asking the reason.'

'Certainly,' replied Mignonnet drily. 'When an act of folly fails, it becomes a crime.'

Max, who presently joined the old Bonapartist soldiers, was received with very significant silence. Potel and Renard each took an arm, and led Max a little way off to talk to him. At this moment Philippe appeared in the distance in full dress; he dragged his cane with an imperturbable air that contrasted with the deep attention Max was obliged to give to what his two last friends were saying. Philippe shook hands with Mignonnet, Carpentier, and a few others. This reception, so unlike that which Max had just met with, finally dispelled from the mind of the latter certain dawnings of cowardice—or of prudence, if you please—to which Flore's entreaties, and, above all, her affection, had given rise when at last he had been left face to face with himself.

'We will fight,' said he to Captain Renard, 'and to the death! So talk to me no more; leave me to play my part out.'

After these words, spoken in a fever of excitement, the three men rejoined the other groups of officers. Max bowed first to Bridau, who returned the compliment with a very cold stare.

'Come, gentlemen; to dinner,' said Major Potel.

'And to drink to the imperishable glory of the little Crop-head, who is now in the paradise of the brave,' cried Renard.

All the party, feeling that the business of dinner would put them in better countenance, understood the little Light-horse Captain's intentions. They hurried into the long, low dining-room of the Restaurant Lacroix, of which the windows looked out on the market-place. Each guest at once took his seat at table, and the adversaries found themselves face to face, as Philippe had

requested. Several of the youth of the town, especially the ex-Knights of Idlesse, somewhat uneasy as to what might take place at this dinner, walked about outside, discussing the critical position in which Philippe had contrived to place Maxence Gilet. They deplored the collision, while admitting that a duel was necessary.

All went well till dessert, though the two fighting men kept a sort of watch on each other, not far removed from uneasiness, in spite of the apparent cheerfulness of the meal. Pending the quarrel, which both, no doubt, were meditating, Philippe was admirably cool, and Max boisterously gay; but, to the connoisseur, each was playing a part.

When dessert was on the table, Philippe said—

'Fill your glasses, my friends; I claim permission to propose our first toast.'

'He said "My friends"; do not fill your glass,' said Renard in Max's ear.

But Max poured out some wine.

'The Grand Army!' cried Philippe with genuine enthusiasm.

'The Grand Army!' was repeated like one word by every voice.

At this moment in the doorway there appeared eleven private soldiers, among them Benjamin and Kouski, who all repeated, 'The Grand Army!'

'Come in, boys; we are going to drink to *his* health,' said Major Potel.

The old soldiers came in, and remained standing behind the officers.

'You see, he is not really dead!' said Kouski to an old sergeant, who had, no doubt, been deploring the Emperor's long agony, now at last ended.

'I claim the second toast,' said Major Mignonnet.

A few of the dessert dishes were disturbed to keep up appearances. Mignonnet rose.

'To those who tried to re-instate *his* son!' said he.

Every one, with the exception of Maxence Gilet, lifted his glass to Philippe Bridau.

'It is my turn,' said Max, rising.

'Max!—it is Max!' they were saying outside. Deep silence reigned within and on the market-place, for Gilet's temper led them to expect some provocation.

'May we *all* meet here again this day twelvemonth!' and he bowed ironically to Philippe.

'He is coming on!' said Kouski to his neighbour.

'The Paris police did not allow you to hold such banquets as this,' said Major Potel to Philippe.

'Why the devil need you speak of the police to Colonel Bridau?' asked Maxence Gilet insolently.

'Major Potel meant no harm on *his* part,' said Philippe, with a bitter smile. The silence was so complete that a fly would have been heard if there had been any.

'The police is sufficiently afraid of me,' said Philippe, 'to have sent me to Issoudun, a place where I have had the good luck to find a few of the right old sort. But it must be confessed that there is not much amusement to be found here. For a man who was not averse to the ladies I have come off but badly. However, I will save my money for the pretty dears—for I am not one of the men who find their fortune in a feather-bed, and Mariette of the opera-house cost me no end of money.'

'Is it for my benefit that you say that, my dear Colonel,' said Max, firing a glance like an electric shock at Philippe.

'If the cap fits, Major Gilet.'

'Colonel, my two friends here, Renard and Potel, will call to-morrow morning——'

'On Mignonnet and Carpentier,' interrupted Philippe, waving his hand to his two neighbours.

'Now,' said Max, 'go on with the toasts.'

Neither of the antagonists had raised his voice above

the ordinary tone of conversation; nothing was solemn but the silence in which they were heard.

'Look here, you fellows,' said Philippe, looking at the privates, 'remember, our affairs are no concern of the townfolks!—Not a word of what has just been said; it must remain a secret with the old Guard.'

'They will obey orders, Colonel,' said Renard; 'I will answer for them.'

'Long live the youngster! May he reign in France!' cried Potel.

'Death to the Englishman!' added Carpentier, and this toast was enthusiastically drunk.

'Shame on Hudson Lowe!' said Captain Renard.

The dessert went off very well, with ample libations. The two antagonists regarded it as a point of honour that this duel, in which an immense fortune was at stake, while the combatants were both men so noted for their courage, should have no feature in common with a vulgar quarrel. Two gentlemen, in the best sense, could not have behaved better than Max and Philippe. The expectations of the young men and townspeople who had gathered on the market-place were disappointed.

All the guests, as brother-soldiers, kept the secret of the episode at dessert. At ten o'clock the two principals were informed that the sword was the weapon decided on. The spot selected for the meeting was behind the apse of the Capuchin chapel, at eight next morning. Goddet, who had been present at the dinner, having formerly served as surgeon-major, had been requested to attend. Whatever came of it, the seconds agreed that the fighting was not to last for more than ten minutes.

At eleven o'clock that night, to the Colonel's great surprise, just as he was going to bed, Monsieur Hochon brought his wife over to see him.

'We know what is happening,' said the old lady, her eyes full of tears, 'and I have come to beseech you not to

go out to-morrow morning without saying your prayers. Lift up your soul to God.'

'Yes, Madame,' said Philippe, to whom old Hochon was signalling from behind his wife.

'That is not all,' said Agathe's godmother; 'I put myself in your poor mother's place, and I have deprived myself of my most precious possession. Look here!' and she held out to Philippe a tooth fastened to a piece of black velvet embroidered with gold, to which two ends of green ribbon were sewn; after showing it to Philippe, she replaced it in a little bag. 'It is a relic of Saint Solange, the patron saint of le Berry; I saved it at the time of the Revolution; wear it on your breast to-morrow.'

'Can it protect me against a sword-stroke?' asked Philippe.

'Yes,' replied the old lady.

'Then I can no more wear that paraphernalia than I could wear a breastplate,' cried Agathe's son.

'What does he mean?' asked Madame Hochon of her husband.

'He says it is not fair play,' replied old Hochon.

'Very well; say no more about it,' said she. 'I will pray for you.'

'Well, Madame, a mouthful of prayers and a straight thrust can do no harm,' said the Colonel, making as though he would pierce Monsieur Hochon through the heart.

The old lady insisted on kissing Philippe on the forehead. Then, as she went out, she gave Benjamin ten crowns, all the money she had, to induce him to sew the relic into his master's trousers-pocket. Which Benjamin did, not believing in the virtue of the bone—for his master, said he, had a much larger one to pick with Gilet—but because he was bound to fulfil a commission so handsomely paid for. Madame Hochon went home firmly trusting in Saint Solange.

At eight next morning, in overcast weather, Max, with his two seconds and Kouski, arrived on the little plot of grass which at that time surrounded the apse of the old Capuchin church. There they found Philippe and his party with Benjamin. Potel and Mignonnet measured twenty-five paces. At each end of the line the two men marked a crease with a spade. Neither of the combatants could retreat beyond the mark under pain of cowardice; each man was to stand on his line, and advance as far as he pleased, when the seconds cried 'Go!'

'Shall we take our coats off?' said Philippe coldly to Gilet.

'By all means, Colonel,' said Maxence, with the confidence of an old hand.

The two men kept on only their trousers, the flesh showing pink through their cambric shirts. Armed with cavalry swords, carefully chosen of the same weight—about three pounds, and the same length—three feet, the two men took their stand, their swords pointed downwards, awaiting the signal. Both were so calm, that in spite of the cold their muscles quivered no more than if they had been of bronze. Goddet, the four seconds, and the two soldiers felt an involuntary thrill.

'They are a fine couple!'

The exclamation broke from Major Potel.

At the moment when the word 'Go!' was spoken, Maxence caught sight of Fario's ominous face; he was looking at them from the hole made by the Knights of the Order to put the pigeons through into his store. Those eyes, from which hatred and revenge shot like two showers of flame, dazzled Max.

The Colonel made straight for his antagonist, putting himself on guard in such a way as to secure the advantage. Experts in the art of killing know that the more skilful of two swordsmen can take the upper hand, to use an expression that suggests by a figure of speech the effect of the superior guard. This attitude, which allows a man

in some degree to see what is coming, so effectually proclaims a duellist of the first class that a sense of his own inferiority sank deep into Max's soul, producing that flutter of mind which is the ruin of a gambler when, face to face with a master-hand or a man in luck, he is disconcerted, and plays worse than usual.

'Ah, the wretch!' said Max to himself. 'He is more than my match. I am done for!'

Max tried a circular flourish, wielding his sword with the skill of a player at single stick; he wanted to dazzle Philippe's eye and strike his weapon, so as to disarm him; but at the first touch he felt that the Colonel had a wrist of iron, as flexible as a steel spring. Maxence had to find some other stroke; and he, wretched man, wanted to think, while Philippe, whose eyes sparkled more vividly than the flashing steel, parried every attack as coolly as a fencing master in pads in a school of arms.

Between two men, when both are so skilful as these combatants, the issue depends on a circumstance somewhat like that which decides the event of the horrible kicking matches among the common people, known as the *Savate*. The victory depends on a false move, on a mistake in the distance, as sudden as a lightning flash, which must be followed up instantly. For a certain time, as short to the spectators as it seems long to the adversaries, the fight consists in watchfulness, absorbing every power of mind and body, but hidden under feints apparently so slow and so cautious that it might be supposed that neither of the men meant business. This instant, followed by a swift and decisive struggle, is agonising to the skilled beholder. Max presently parried badly, and the Colonel struck the sword out of his hand.

'Pick it up!' he said, pausing in the fight. 'I am not the man to kill a disarmed foe.'

It was the sublime of ruthlessness. This generosity showed such certain superiority that it was regarded as the cleverest design by the lookers-on. In fact, when

Max took up his guard again he had lost his presence of mind, and again, of course, found himself below the high guard which threatened him while covering his adversary. Then he hoped to retrieve his shameful defeat by a daring blow; he no longer tried to guard himself; he took his sword in both hands and rushed furiously on the Colonel, to wound him mortally, while allowing himself to be killed. Though Philippe received a sword-stroke which cut his forehead and part of his face, he split Max's skull obliquely by a terrible swashing cut, intended to break the murderous blow Max meant to deal him. These two frantic cuts ended the fight in nine minutes. Fario came down to feast his eyes on the sight of his enemy's death-struggle, for in a man so powerful as Max the muscles twitch frightfully. Philippe was carried to his uncle's house.

Thus died one of those men destined to achieve great things if he had but remained in the position to which he was fitted; a man who was a spoilt child of nature, endowed with courage, cool-blood, and the political astuteness of a Cæsar Borgia. But education had not given him that loftiness of mind and conduct without which no achievement is possible in any walk of life. He was not regretted, for the insidious action of his adversary —a more worthless creature than himself—had succeeded in lowering him in public regard. His death put an end to the exploits of the Knights of Idlesse, to the great satisfaction of the town of Issoudun. Philippe got into no trouble in consequence of this duel, which indeed appeared to be the outcome of divine vengeance, and of which the details were discussed through all the neighbourhood with unanimous praise of the two antagonists.

'They ought to have killed each other,' said Monsieur Mouilleron. 'That would have been a good riddance for the Government.'

Flore Brazier's position would have been a very embarrassing one but for the severe illness produced by

Max's death; she had an attack on the brain, complicated by dangerous inflammation, brought on by the fatigues and shocks of the last three days. If she had been in her usual health, she might perhaps have fled from the house where, just beneath her, in Max's room and Max's bed, lay Max's murderer. For three months she hovered between life and death under the treatment of Monsieur Goddet, who also attended Philippe.

As soon as Philippe could hold a pen he wrote the following letters:—

'To Monsieur Desroches, Attorney-at-Law.

'I have already killed the more venomous of the two beasts, not without getting a hole in my head from a sword-cut, but the rascal happily struck with a dead hand. There remains another viper with whom I must try to come to some understanding, for to my uncle she is as his very gizzard. I was much afraid lest this Rabouilleuse, who is devilish handsome, should take herself off, for my uncle would have gone after her; but the shock which came upon her at an evil moment has nailed her to her bed. If God were gracious to me, He would take her to Himself while she repents of her sins. Meanwhile, thanks to Monsieur Hochon—the old man is well—I have the doctor on my side, named Goddet, a good apostle, who opines that an uncle's inheritance is better placed in his nephew's hands than in those of such a minx. Monsieur Hochon exerts some influence over one Fichet, who has a rich daughter, on whom Goddet has an eye as a wife for his son; so that the thousand-franc note that has been dangled before him for curing my nut has little to do with his devotion. This Goddet, formerly Surgeon-Major in the Third Line Regiment, has also been "talked to" by my friends, two brave officers, Mignonnet and Carpentier, so that he is humbugging his other patient.

'"There is a God after all, you see, my dear," says he, feeling her pulse. "You have caused a great misfortune; you must repair the mischief. The hand of God is in all this. (What the hand of God is made to do is incredible!) Religion is religion; submit, be resigned; to begin with, it will calm your mind, and do as much to cure you as my drugs. Above all, remain here to take care of your master. And then, forgive! Forgiveness is the law of the Christian."

'This Goddet has promised that he will keep la Rabouilleuse in bed for three months. Perhaps the woman will insensibly become accustomed to our living under the same roof. I have secured the cook on my side. The abominable old thing tells her mistress that Max would have made life very hard for her. She declares that she heard the dead man say that if after the old man's death he should be obliged to marry Flore, he did not mean to clog his career with a hussy. And the cook even insinuated that Max would have found means to get rid of her.

'So all is well. My uncle, by old Hochon's advice, has destroyed his will.'

'To Monsieur Giroudeau, at Mademoiselle Florentine's,
Rue de Vendôme au Marais.

'My old Comrade,—Find out whether that little puss Césarine is engaged, and try to persuade her to be in readiness to come to Issoudun as soon as I ask her. The little slut must then start by return of post. She must get herself up respectably, and shed everything that smacks of the side-scenes; she would have to figure in the country as the daughter of a brave soldier killed on the field of honour. So the primmest behaviour, a schoolgirl fit-out, and first-class virtue,—these are the order of the day. If I should need her, and if she is a success, at my uncle's death she shall have fifty thousand francs. If she is busy, explain the case to Florentine, and find

me, between you, some little walking lady who can play the part.

'I had my scalp peeled in the duel with my fortune-grabber, and it has given my eye a twist. I will tell you all about it. Ah! old man, we will see good times yet, and have plenty of fun with others—not the same others. If you can forward me five hundred flimsies, I can find use for them. Ta-ta, old cock. Light your pipe with this document. It must be understood that the officer's daughter hails from Châteauroux, and professes to be in need of help. However, I hope not to be obliged to have recourse to this dangerous game. Remember me to Mariette and all our friends.'

Agathe, on hearing from Madame Hochon, hastened to Issoudun, and was received by her brother, who gave her Philippe's old room. The poor mother, whose heart was soft again towards her villainous son, enjoyed a few happy days while hearing the citizens of Issoudun sing the Colonel's praises.

'After all, dear child,' said Madame Hochon on the day of Agathe's arrival, 'youth must have its day. The follies of soldiers who served the Emperor cannot be the same as those of sons looked after by respectable fathers. If only you could know all the tricks that wretch Max would play here by night! Now, thanks to your son, Issoudun breathes and sleeps in peace. Judgment came late to Philippe, but it came; as he told us, three months' imprisonment in the Luxembourg leaves a little ballast in the brain; in short, his conduct here has delighted Monsieur Hochon, and he has won general respect. If your son can but remain a little while out of the way of the temptations of Paris, he will end by giving you every satisfaction.'

Agathe, as she heard these comforting words, looked at her godmother with eyes full of happy tears.

Philippe played the good boy to his mother; he wanted

to make use of her. This astute diplomatist did not want to have recourse to Césarine unless he found himself the object of Flore's aversion. He understood that Flore was an admirable tool, moulded by Maxence, and to his uncle a habit of life; he meant to make use of her rather than of a Parisian, who might have made the old man marry her. Just as Fouché advised Louis XVIII. to lie between Napoleon's sheets rather than to grant the *Charter*, Philippe would have liked to lie quietly between Gilet's sheets. Still, he did not wish to cast a slur on the reputation he had just made in the province. Now, to carry on Max's relations with la Rabouilleuse would be as odious on his part as on the woman's. He might, without discredit, live under his uncle's roof and at his uncle's expense, in consideration of his relationship; but he could have nothing to say to Flore unless she were rehabilitated. In the meshes of these difficulties, the admirable plan occurred to him of making la Rabouilleuse his aunt. So, with this scheme unrevealed, he begged his mother to go to see the woman and show her some affection, treating her as a sister-in-law.

'I confess, my dear mother,' said he, with a sanctimonious air, and looking at Monsieur and Madame Hochon, who had come to sit with their dear Agathe, 'that my uncle's way of life is unseemly; he has only to legalise matters to win the respect of the town for Mademoiselle Brazier. Would it not be better for her to be Madame Rouget than the housekeeper-mistress of an old bachelor? Is it not a simpler matter to acquire legal rights by marriage than to try to oust a family of legitimate heirs?—If you, Monsieur Hochon, or some worthy priest, would speak of this affair, it would put an end to a scandal that offends respectable people. Then Mademoiselle Brazier would be made happy by finding herself welcomed by you as a sister and by me as an aunt.'

Next day Madame Hochon and Agathe stood by

Mademoiselle Flore Brazier's bedside, where they set forth to the invalid and to Rouget all Philippe's admirable sentiments. The Colonel was lauded throughout the town as a man of lofty and excellent character, especially in his conduct with regard to Flore. For a whole month the advantages to be derived from her marriage with old Rouget were impressed on Flore by Père Goddet, her doctor—a powerful influence over the mind of a patient—by good Madame Hochon speaking in behalf of religion, and by the gentle and pious Agathe.

Then when, fascinated by the idea of being Madame Rouget and a respectable and respected citizen's wife, she was only eager to be well and celebrate the wedding, it was not difficult to make her understand that she could not become one of the old family of Rouget by turning Philippe out of doors.

'And, after all,' said old Goddet, 'is it not to him that you owe this high preferment? Max would never have allowed you to marry Père Rouget. And then,' he whispered in her ear, 'if you have children, will not Max be avenged? The Bridaus will get nothing.'

Two months after the fatal event, in February 1823, the invalid, by the advice of all about her, and implored by Rouget, received Philippe, whose scar made her weep, but whose manner to her, softened almost to affection, soothed her greatly. By Philippe's desire he was left alone with his future aunt.

'My dear girl,' said the soldier, 'I, from the first, have advised that you should marry my uncle; and if you consent, it can be done as soon as you are recovered——'

'So I am told,' said she.

'It is only natural that as circumstances compelled me to do you an injury, I want to do you as much good as possible. A fortune, a position, and a family are worth more than you have lost. At my uncle's death you

would not long have been that fellow's wife, for I have heard from his friends that he had no happy lot in store for you! Look here, my dear child, let us understand each other. We will all live happily. You are to be my aunt—nothing but my aunt.

'You must take care that my uncle does not forget me in his will; on my part, you shall see how I will have you provided for in the settlements. Keep calm, think it over; we will speak of it again. As you see, the most sensible people, all the town, advise you to abandon an illegal position; and nobody objects to your seeing me. Every one understands that in life sentiment must give way to interest. You will be handsomer than ever on your marriage day. Your illness, by leaving you pale, has given you a distinguished air. If my uncle were not so desperately in love with you, on my honour,' said he, rising and kissing her hand, 'you would be the wife of Colonel Bridau.'

Philippe went away, leaving this last speech in Flore's mind to arouse a vague idea of revenge, which smiled on the woman, who was almost happy at having seen this terrible personage at her feet. Philippe had just played, in little, the scene that Richard III. plays with the queen he has lately made a widow. The upshot of the scene shows that interest wrapped up in feeling strikes very deeply into the heart, and dispels the most genuine grief. This is how, in private life, Nature allows herself to accomplish what in works of genius is a master-stroke of art; interest is the means by which she works, the genius of money.

Thus, in the beginning of April 1823, Jean-Jacques Rouget's room presented the spectacle of a magnificent dinner in honour of the signing of a marriage-contract between Mademoiselle Flore Brazier and the old bachelor. No one was at all surprised. The guests were Monsieur Héron; the four witnesses—Messieurs Mignonnet,

Carpentier, Hochon, and the elder Goddet; the Maire and the parish priest; Agathe Bridau, Madame Hochon, and her friend Madame Borniche, that is to say, the two old women who were authoritative in Issoudun. And the bride was keenly alive to this concession, won for her by Philippe, the ladies regarding it as a mark of protection needed by a penitent damsel. Flore was dazzlingly beautiful. The curé, who had for a fortnight been catechising the ignorant Rabouilleuse, was to give her next morning her first Communion.

This wedding was the subject of the following article, published in the *Journal du Cher* at Bourges, and in the *Journal de l'Indre* at Châteauroux :—

'*Issoudun.*

'The religious movement is making progress in le Berry. All the friends of the Church and respectable people in this town collected yesterday to witness a ceremony, by which one of the chief landowners in this part of the country put an end to a scandalous state of affairs dating from a time when religion was a dead letter in these parts. This issue, due to the enlightened zeal of the ecclesiastics of this town, will, we hope, find imitators, and put an end to these discreditable unsanctified unions, begun at the most disastrous period of the Revolutionary misrule.

'One thing is noteworthy in the case of which we write: it was brought about by the urgency of a Colonel of the Imperial Army, quartered in our town by a sentence of the Supreme Court, who, by this marriage, may forfeit his uncle's fortune. Such disinterestedness is rare enough in our day to deserve to be made public.'

Under the contract Rouget settled on Flore a sum of a hundred thousand francs, and an annuity in case of widowhood of thirty thousand francs. After the wedding, which was splendid, Agathe went back to Paris, the

happiest of mothers, and there gave to Joseph and Desroches what she called the good news.

'Your son is much too deep not to lay hands on her inheritance,' replied the attorney, when he had heard Madame Bridau out. 'And you and your poor Joseph will never have a farthing of your brother's fortune.'

'You will always be the same—you and Joseph—always unjust to that poor boy,' said his mother. 'His conduct before the Court was that of a great politician. He succeeded in saving a great many heads!—Philippe's errors are the outcome of want of occupation; his great powers lie idle; but he has learnt how injurious faults of conduct must be to a man who wants to rise in the world, and he has ambition, I am sure; nor am I the only person who believes in his future. Monsieur Hochon is firmly convinced that Philippe has a high destiny.'

'Oh yes,' said Desroches, 'if he chooses to apply his utterly perverse intelligence to making a fortune he will succeed, for he is capable of anything, and men of that stamp get on fast.'

'And why should he not succeed by honest means?' said Madame Bridau.

'You will see,' answered Desroches. 'Lucky or unlucky, Philippe will always be the man of the Rue Mazarine, the murderer of Madame Descoings, the household thief. But be easy; he will seem perfectly honest in the eyes of the world.'

On the day after the marriage Philippe took Madame Rouget by the arm, when his uncle had gone upstairs to dress, for the couple had come down to breakfast, Flore in a wrapper, and the old man in his dressing-gown.

'Aunt-in-law,' said he, leading her into a window recess, 'you are now a member of the family. Thanks to me, the lawyers have taken care of you. Now come! no nonsense. I mean to play the game with the cards on the table. I know all the tricks you could play me, and I shall keep a sharper eye on you than any duenna.

As to what goes on in the house, I shall sit there, by Heaven! like a spider in the middle of its web.—Now, this will show you that while you were in bed, unable to move hand or foot, I could have had you turned out of doors without a sou. Read this.'

And he held out to Flore the following letter:—

'My dear Boy,—Florentine, who has at last come out at the Opera, in the new house, in a *pas de trois* with Mariette and Tullia, has never forgotten you, any more than Florine, who has finally thrown over Lousteau and taken up with Nathan. These two sly-boots have found you the sweetest creature in the world, a child of seventeen, as pretty as an English girl, as prim as a lady at her tricks, as cunning as Desroches, as trustworthy as Godeschal; and Mariette has rigged her out, and wishes you good luck. There is no woman living who could hold her own against this angel, concealing a demon; she will be able to play any part, to get round your uncle, and make him crazy with love. She has the heavenly expression that poor Coralie had; she can cry, she has a voice that would extract a thousand-franc note from a heart of the hardest granite, and the hussy swigs down champagne with the best of us. She is a jewel of a girl; she is under obligations to Mariette, and is anxious to make some return. After gulping down the fortunes of two Englishmen, one Russian, and a Roman prince, Mademoiselle Esther is just now in very low water. If you give her ten thousand francs, she will be content. She said just now, "Well, I have never had a citizen to wheedle; it will be practice for me!" Finot knows her well, Bixiou, des Lupeaulx, all our set, in fact. If there were any fortunes left in France, she would be the most famous courtesan of modern times.

'My style smacks of Nathan, Bixiou, and Finot, who are playing the fool with the above-named Esther, in the most splendid rooms you can imagine, which have just

been arranged *à la Florine* by old Lord Dudley, Marsay's real father, whom the clever little actress has quite bowled over, thanks to the costume of her new part. Tullia is still with the Duc de Rhétoré, Mariette with the Duc de Maufrigneuse, so they between them can get you a ticket-of-leave on the King's fête day. Try to have your uncle safe under the daisies by next Saint-Louis' Day, come back with the fortune, and spend some of it with Esther and your old friends, who sign in a body to remind you of their existence.

'NATHAN, FLORINE, BIXIOU, FINOT, MARIETTE,
'FLORENTINE, GIROUDEAU, TULLIA.'

This letter quivered in Madame Rouget's hands in a way that betrayed her agitation of mind and body. The aunt dared not look at the nephew, who fixed on her a pair of eyes full of terrible expression.

'I have full confidence in you,' said he. 'You see that I have; but I must have something in return. I made you my aunt in order to marry you some day. You are worth quite as much as Esther to my uncle. A year hence we must go to Paris, the only place where beauty can live. You will enjoy yourself rather more than you do here, for it is a perpetual carnival. I shall rejoin the army and be made a general, and you will be a great lady. That is your future; work it out.—But I must have a pledge of our alliance. Within one month you must procure for me my uncle's power of attorney under the pretext of relieving you and him alike of the cares of money. One month after I must have a special power to transfer his stock. When once the securities are in my name, we shall have an equal interest in marrying each other some day. All that, my fair aunt, is plain and precise. There must be no ambiguity between you and me. I may marry my aunt-in-law after a year's widowhood, whereas I could not marry a disreputable nobody.'

He left the room without awaiting her answer. When, an hour later, Védie came in to clear away the breakfast, she found her mistress pale and in a perspiration in spite of the cool season. Flore was feeling like a woman who has fallen to the bottom of a precipice; she saw nothing before her but blackness, and on that blackness, as in some dark beyond, flitted monstrous things, indistinctly seen, and filling her with terror. She felt the damp chill of these caverns. She was instinctively afraid of this man, and nevertheless a voice cried to her that she deserved to have him for her master. She could not struggle against fate; Flore Brazier, for decency's sake, had rooms in Père Rouget's house, but Madame Rouget belonged to her husband, and so was bereft of the inestimable independence that a housekeeper-mistress preserves.

In this dreadful position she hoped she might have a child; but in the last five years Jean-Jacques had become absolutely decrepit. This marriage was to the poor old man what Louis XII.'s second marriage was to him. Again, the constant watchfulness of such a man as Philippe, who had nothing to do, for he gave up his employment, made any kind of vengeance impossible. Benjamin was an innocent but devoted spy. La Védie quaked in Philippe's presence. Flore was alone and helpless. To crown all, she was afraid of death; without knowing how Philippe could make away with her, she guessed that the suspicion of a coming heir would be her death-warrant; the sound of that voice, the covert flash of that gambler's eye, the soldier's slightest movement—treating her as he did with the politest brutality—made her shudder. As to the power of attorney demanded by the ferocious Colonel, who was a hero in the eyes of Issoudun, he had it as soon as he asked for it; for Flore fell under his dominion as France had fallen under that of Napoleon.

Rouget meanwhile, like a moth whose feet are caught

in the burning wax of a taper, was fast wasting his remaining strength; and his nephew, looking on at this lingering death, was as unmoved as the diplomatists who, in 1814, watched the convulsions of Imperial France.

Philippe, who had no belief in Napoleon II., then wrote the following letter to the War Minister, and Mariette got it delivered by the Duc de Maufrigneuse:—

'MONSEIGNEUR,—

'Napoleon no longer lives. I remained faithful to him after taking the oath; but now I am at liberty to offer my services to His Majesty. If your Excellency would condescend to explain my conduct to His Majesty, the King will understand that it has conformed to the laws of honour, if not to those of the realm. The King, who thought it but natural that his aide-de-camp, General Rapp, should mourn for his former master, will no doubt be equally indulgent to me. Napoleon was my benefactor.

'I therefore entreat your Excellency to take into consideration my request for employment with my full rank, assuring you of my entire submission. This will show you, Monseigneur, that the King will find me the most faithful of his subjects.

'Accept, I beg, the expression of respect with which I have the honour to remain

'Your Excellency's

'Most obedient and most humble servant,

'PHILIPPE BRIDAU.

'Formerly Major of Brigade in the Dragoon Guards; Officer of the Legion of Honour, under surveillance of the State Police at Issoudun.'

With this letter was a request for permission to visit Paris on urgent private affairs, supported by Mouilleron, who annexed letters from the Maire, the Sous-préfet,

and the Superintendent of Police at Issoudun, who all spoke in praise of Philippe, and dwelt on the article written on the occasion of his uncle's marriage.

A fortnight later, at the time when the picture exhibition was opened, Philippe received the permit he had asked for, and a letter, in which the War Minister informed him that, by the King's orders, he was, as a first favour, reinstated on the Army List as Lieutenant-Colonel.

Philippe moved to Paris with his aunt and old Rouget, whom he carried off to the Treasury three days after their arrival to sign the transfer of the State bond, which thus became his own property. The feeble old man and la Rabouilleuse were flung by their nephew into frantic dissipations and the dangerous company of indefatigable actresses, journalists, artists, and women of equivocal character, among whom Philippe had spent his youth, and where old Rouget found Rabouilleuses enough to be the death of him. Giroudeau undertook that Père Rouget should die the happy death made famous since, it is said, by a Marshal of France. Lolotte, one of the handsomest 'walking ladies' at the Opera, was Rouget's bewitching assassin. The old man died after a splendid supper given by Florentine; and whether the supper or Mademoiselle Lolotte finished off the old provincial, it is difficult to decide. Lolotte ascribed his death to a slice of *pâté de foie gras*; and as the Strasbourg pie could make no rejoinder, it is taken as proved that the good man died of indigestion.

Madame Rouget found herself in her element in this excessively free-and-easy society; but Philippe gave her Mariette for a chaperon, and she did not allow the widow to play the fool, though her mourning was lightened by some flirtations.

In October 1823 Philippe, armed with a power of attorney from his aunt, returned to Issoudun to wind up his uncle's estate, a business quickly accomplished, for in

March 1824 he was in Paris with sixteen hundred thousand francs, the net value in hard cash of his deceased uncle's estate, not inclusive of the valuable pictures, which had never been moved from old Hochon's keeping. Philippe banked his money with Mongenod & Son, the house in which young Baruch Borniche had found a berth, and of whose solvency and honesty old Hochon had given a satisfactory report. This firm took the sixteen hundred thousand francs at six per cent. per annum, on condition of three months' notice being given previous to withdrawal of the capital.

One fine day Philippe went to request his mother's presence at his marriage, the witnesses being Giroudeau, Finot, Nathan, and Bixiou. By the marriage contract Madame Rouget, widow, settled all her possessions on her husband in the event of her dying childless. There were no letters of formal announcement, no party, no display, for Philippe had his own schemes; he took rooms for his wife in the Rue Saint-Georges, an apartment sold ready furnished by Lolotte, which Madame Bridau the younger thought delightful, but where her husband rarely set foot.

Without letting anybody know what he was doing, Philippe purchased for two hundred and fifty thousand francs a house in the Rue de Clichy, at a time when no one suspected the value which property in that part of the town would attain—a magnificent mansion, for which he paid fifty thousand crowns down, the rest to be paid off in two years. He spent enormous sums on the interior and in furnishing it, devoting to this his whole income for two years. The splendid pictures, cleaned and restored, and valued at three hundred thousand francs, were displayed to full advantage.

The accession of Charles x. had raised to greater favour than ever the Duc de Chaulieu's family; and his eldest son, the Duc de Rhétoré, often met Philippe at Tullia's. In the person of Charles x. the elder branch

of the Bourbons supposed itself to be definitely seated on the throne, and it followed the advice given at an earlier time by Marshal Gouvion Saint-Cyr to secure the attachment of the soldiers of the Empire. Philippe, who, no doubt, gave valuable information as to the conspiracies of 1820 and 1822, was appointed Lieutenant-Colonel in the Duc de Maufrigneuse's regiment. This delightful grand gentleman felt himself under an obligation to help the man who had robbed him of Mariette. The *corps de ballet* were not without some knowledge of this promotion.

It had, moreover, been decided by the wisdom of Charles x.'s privy council that His Royal Highness the Dauphin should assume a slight tinge of Liberalism. Hence the great Philippe, now the satellite of the Duc de Maufrigneuse, was presented not only to the Dauphin, but also to the Dauphiness, who was not ill disposed towards blunt manners and military men with a character for fidelity. Philippe quite appreciated the Dauphin's part, and he took advantage of the first performance of this assumed Liberalism to get himself appointed aide-de-camp to a marshal in favour at Court.

In January 1827 Philippe, transferred to the King's Body-guard as Lieutenant-Colonel of the regiment to which the Duc de Maufrigneuse had been appointed, solicited the honour of being allowed to assume a title. Under the Restoration ennoblement became almost a right of the commoners who were promoted to the Guards. Colonel Bridau, having just bought the estate of Brambourg, craved permission to entail the property with the title of Count. This favour he obtained by taking advantage of his connections in the highest circles, appearing with a gorgeous display of carriages and liveries, in short, with the air and style of a lord.

No sooner did Philippe, Lieutenant-Colonel of the most dashing cavalry regiment of the Guards, see his name in the Army List as Comte de Brambourg than he

took to hanging about the house of Lieutenant-General the Comte de Soulanges, and paying attention to his younger daughter, Mademoiselle Amélie de Soulanges. The insatiable Philippe, supported by the mistresses of the most influential men, next craved the honour of being made aide-de-camp to Monseigneur the Dauphin. He had the audacity to say to the Dauphiness that 'an old officer, wounded in many a battle and familiar with war on a grand scale, might on occasion be of use to His Royal Highness.'

Philippe, who could take the tone of any servility, was, in these high circles, exactly what he ought to be, just as he had been a second Mignonnet at Issoudun. He lived in the greatest style, gave splendid entertainments and dinners, admitting to his house none of his old friends whose position might compromise his prospects. Thus he was pitiless to the companions of his debaucheries. He refused point-blank when Bixiou asked him to speak a word in favour of Giroudeau, who wished to rejoin the service when Florentine threw him over.

'He cannot behave himself,' said Philippe.

'So that was what he said of me!' cried Giroudeau. 'And I relieved him of his uncle!'

'We will serve him out,' said Bixiou.

Philippe wanted to marry Mademoiselle Amélie de Soulanges, to be made a general, and to have the command of a regiment of the Body-guard. He asked for so much that, to keep him quiet, he was made Commander of the Legion of Honour, and of the Order of Saint-Louis.

One evening Agathe and Joseph, walking homewards in the rain, saw Philippe drive past in uniform, covered with Orders; he was lounging in a corner of his handsome *coupé*, lined with yellow silk, and with a coat-of-arms on the panel surmounted by a Count's coronet, on his way to an entertainment at the Elysée-Bourbon; he

splashed his mother and brother, recognising them with a patronising nod.

'He is going it; he is going it! the old rogue!' said Joseph to his mother. 'At the same time he might send us something better than the mud in our faces.'

'He is in such a splendid position, so far above us, that we must not owe him a grudge if he forgets us,' said Madame Bridau. 'To climb so steep a hill, he must have so many obligations to fulfil, so many sacrifices to make, that he may well be unable to come to see us even while thinking of us.'

'My dear fellow,' said the Duc de Maufrigneuse one evening to the new Comte de Brambourg, 'I am sure that your proposal will be taken in good part; but to marry Mademoiselle Amélie de Soulanges you must be a free man. What have you done with your wife?'

'My wife?' said Philippe, with a gesture, a look, an accent such as Frédérick Lemaître afterwards conceived of in one of his most terrible parts. 'Alas! I have the melancholy certainty of losing her. She has not a week to live. Ah! my dear Duke, you do not know what it is to have married beneath you! A woman who had been a cook, who has the tastes of a cook, and who brings dishonour on me,—I am much to be pitied. But I have had the honour of explaining the situation to Madame the Dauphiness; the necessity arose some time since for saving a million of francs, which my uncle had left by will to this creature. Happily, my wife has taken to drams; at her death I become the possessor of a million in the hands of Messrs. Mongenod; I have more than thirty thousand francs in the five per cents.; and my estate—entailed—which brings in forty thousand francs a year. If, as everything leads us to suppose, Monsieur de Soulanges receives a Marshal's bâton, I, with the title of Comte de Brambourg, am in a position to become general and a peer of France. It will be

a fitting retirement for an aide-de-camp to the Dauphin.'

After the Salon of 1823 the painter to the King, one of the kindest-hearted men of his day, had obtained for Joseph's mother a lottery-ticket office in the neighbourhood of the Halle. Subsequently Agathe was fortunate enough to be able to exchange, without paying any premium, with the holder of a similar office in the Rue de Seine, in a house where Joseph took a studio. The widow now, in her turn, employed a clerk, and cost her son nothing. Still, in 1828, though at the head of a very good lottery office, which she owed to Joseph's fame, Madame Bridau did not yet believe in his glory—which, indeed, was hotly disputed, as all true glory is. The great painter, always struggling with his passions, wanted much; he could not earn enough to keep up the luxury required by his position in society, and by his distinguished eminence in the younger school. Though he had warm adherents in his friends of the Art Society, and in Mademoiselle des Touches, he did not appeal to the Philistine. This Creature, in whose hands the money lies nowadays, never loosens his purse-strings for talent that can be questioned; and Joseph saw the classicists and the Institute arrayed against him, with critics who waited on these two powers. Besides, the Comte de Brambourg affected amazement when any one spoke to him of Joseph. So the courageous artist, though upheld by Gros and Gérard, who secured him the Cross during the Salon of 1827, had few commissions. If the Minister of the Interior and the Royal Establishments were little inclined to purchase his large pictures, the dealers and wealthy foreigners still less cared to be burthened with them. Besides, as we know, Joseph allows himself to be rather too much led away by fancy, and the result is an inequality of work, of which his enemies take advantage to dispute his talent.

'Painting on the heroic scale is in a bad way,' said his friend Pierre Grassou, as he turned out daubs to the taste of the Philistines, whose rooms were ill suited to large canvases.

'What you want is a cathedral to decorate,' Schinner would say, 'then you would reduce criticism to silence by some great work.'

All these speeches, which frightened good Agathe, confirmed her first opinion of Joseph and Philippe. Facts were on the side of the woman, who was still so entirely provincial; was not Philippe, her favourite child, at last the great man of the family? She looked on the sins of the boy's youth as the aberrations of genius. Joseph, whose efforts left her unmoved—for she saw too much of them in their early state to admire them when finished—seemed to her no further forward in 1828 than in 1816. Poor Joseph owed money; he was crushed under the weight of debt; he had taken up a thankless calling that brought no returns. In short, Agathe could not imagine why an Order should have been bestowed on Joseph.

Philippe, with strength enough never to go to the gaming table, and invited to *Madame's* entertainments, the splendid Colonel, who at reviews and in processions rode past in a gorgeous uniform, gaudy with two red ribbons, realised Agathe's maternal dreams. One day at a public ceremonial Philippe had wiped out the odious picture of his poverty on the Quai de l'École, by passing his mother on the same spot, preceding the Dauphin, with his aigrette, and his shako, and his pelisse splendid with gold-lace and fur. While to the artist she had become a sort of devoted Grey Sister, Agathe no longer felt herself a mother excepting to the dashing aide-de-camp to His Royal Highness Monseigneur the Dauphin. In her pride of Philippe she could have believed that she owed her easier means to him, forgetting that the lottery office had come to her through Joseph.

One day Agathe saw her poor artist so much worried

by the heavy total of his colourman's bill, that, while cursing the arts, she longed to release him from his debts. The poor woman, who kept house on the proceeds of her lottery tickets, took good care never to ask Joseph for a farthing. Thus, she had no money; but she trusted to Philippe's kind heart and purse. For three years, from day to day, she had expected a visit from her son; she pictured him bringing her an enormous sum, and rejoiced in advance over the delight of giving it to Joseph, whose opinion of Philippe remained unchanged, as did that of Desroches.

So, without Joseph's knowledge, she wrote to Philippe the following letter:—

'To Monsieur le Comte de Brambourg.

'My dear Philippe,—For five years you have never given your mother the smallest thought. That is not kind. You ought to remember the past, if only for the sake of your excellent brother. Joseph now is in need of money, while you are swimming in opulence; he works, while you rush from party to party. You possess the whole of my brother's fortune. In short, from what little Borniche tells me, you have two hundred thousand francs a year. Well, then, come and see Joseph. In the course of your visit leave in the death's-head a score of thousand-franc notes. You owe us that much, Philippe; your brother will nevertheless feel himself much obliged to you, to say nothing of the pleasure you will give your mother. Agathe Bridau *née* Rouget.'

Two days after the maid brought up to the studio, where poor Agathe had just breakfasted with Joseph, the following dreadful note:—

'My dear Mother,—I cannot marry Mademoiselle Amélie de Soulanges with a handful of walnut shells,

when behind the name of Comte de Brambourg there lies that of your son PHILIPPE BRIDAU.'

As she sank almost fainting on the studio sofa, Agathe dropped the letter. The slight rustle of the paper as it fell, and Agathe's low but terrible cry, startled Joseph, who was painting away vehemently on a sketch. He looked round the edge of his canvas to see what was happening. Seeing his mother lying there, the painter put down his palette and brushes, and flew to raise her, almost a corpse. He took Agathe in his arms, carried her on to the bed in her room, and sent the maid to fetch his friend Bianchon. As soon as Joseph could question his mother, she confessed her letter to Philippe and his reply to her. The artist went to pick up the note, of which the concise brutality had broken the frail heart of the poor mother by overturning the towering edifice raised by her maternal preference.

Joseph came back to his mother's bedside, and had the wit to be silent. He never mentioned his brother during the three weeks while his poor mother lay, not ill indeed, but dying. Indeed, Bianchon, who came every day and attended the poor woman with the devotion of a true friend, told Joseph the truth on the first day.

'At her age,' said he, 'and in the position in which your mother will find herself, we must only try to make death as easy to her as possible.'

Agathe, indeed, felt herself so surely called to God, that on the very next day she begged the religious care of old Abbe Loraux, her spiritual director for two-and-twenty years. As soon as she was alone with him, after pouring all her sorrow into his heart, she repeated what she had said to her godmother, what she was constantly saying—

'How have I angered God? Do I not love Him with all my soul? Have I not walked in the way of salvation? What is my sin? And if I am so guilty of

an error I am unconscious of, have I time now to repair it?'

'No,' said the old man in a mild voice. 'Alas! your life seems blameless, and your soul unspotted; but God's eye, poor suffering woman, is more penetrating than that of His ministers. I myself see clearly now, but too late —for you have blinded me till now.'

As she heard this speech, uttered by lips from which hitherto no words but those of peace and honey had fallen for her, Agathe sat up in bed, with wide eyes full of terror and distress.

'Speak, speak!' she cried.

'Be comforted,' said the old priest. 'From the manner of your punishment you may look for forgiveness. God is severe in this world only on His chosen few. Woe unto those whose misdeeds find favouring chances; they will be kneaded again in human form till they in their turn are sternly punished for mere mistakes and ripen into food for heaven. Your life, my daughter, has been one long mistake. You fell into the pit you dug for yourself, for we always fail on the side we ourselves have weakened. You gave all your heart to a wretch in whom you saw your glory, and you have misprized the child who is your true glory. Your injustice has been so deep that you have not observed this striking contrast; your means of living even have come to you from Joseph, while your other son has constantly plundered you. Your poorer son, who loves you without the reward of equal tenderness, gives you your daily bread; while the rich man, who has never cared for you, and who scorns you, longs for your death.'

'Oh! for that matter——' she put in.

'Yes,' the priest went on, 'your humble condition interferes with the schemes of his pride.—As a mother, this is your crime! As a woman, your sufferings and sorrows promise you the joy and peace and the Lord. Your son Joseph is so noble, that his affection has never

been diminished by the injustice of your favouritism; love him as he deserves. Give him your whole heart during these last days. And pray for him—I will go and pray for you.'

The mother's eyes, unsealed by so firm a hand, looked back with a retrospective glance on the whole of her past life. Enlightened by this sudden flash, she perceived the involuntary wrong she had done, and melted into tears. The old priest was so much moved by the spectacle of an erring and repentant creature, sinning solely by ignorance, that he left the room not to betray his compassion.

About two hours after the confessor's departure, Joseph came into his mother's room. He had been to a friend to borrow the necessary money to pay his most pressing debts, and he crept in on tiptoe, believing that his mother was asleep. He then sat down in an armchair, without being seen by the sick woman.

A sob, broken by the words, 'Will he ever forgive me?' made Joseph start up with the cold perspiration down his back, for he thought his mother was in the delirium that precedes death.

'What is the matter, mother?' he cried, terrified to see her eyes red with weeping and her woe-stricken face.

'Oh, Joseph! can you forgive me, my child?' cried she.

'What do you mean?' asked the artist.

'I have not loved you as you deserved——'

'What a preposterous idea!' cried he. 'You have not loved me——? Have we not lived together these seven years? Have you not kept house for me for seven years? Do I not see you every day? Do I not hear your voice? Are you not the gentle and indulgent sharer of my poverty?—You do not understand painting! Well, but that is not to be taught. And only yesterday I was saying to Grassou, "The thing that comforts me in all my struggles is that I have such a good mother; she is just what an artist's wife ought to be; she takes

care of everything; she looks after all my creature comforts without making any fuss——"'

'No, Joseph, no. You have loved me, and I have never returned you tenderness for tenderness. Oh! how I wish I might live! . . . Give me your hand.'

Agathe took her son's hand, kissed and held it to her heart, gazing at him for a long time, her blue eyes radiant with the affection she had hitherto always kept for Philippe. The painter, who had studied expression, was so struck by the change, and saw so plainly that his mother's heart had opened to him, that he put his arms round her and held her clasped for some seconds, saying like a crazy creature, 'Oh, mother, mother!'

'Ah, I feel I am forgiven!' said she. 'God must surely ratify a son's forgiveness of his mother.'

'You must keep calm; do not worry yourself. It is all over now. I feel that I am enough loved at this moment for all the past,' cried Joseph, laying his mother gently on the pillows.

During a fortnight, while life and death were contending for the saintly creature, she had for Joseph such looks, such impulses of soul and expressions of gesture, as revealed love so perfect that a whole life seemed contained in each outburst. The mother now thought only of her son; she counted herself as nothing, and, upheld by love, no longer felt her sufferings. She made artless speeches like a child's. D'Arthez, Michel Chrestien, Fulgence Ridal, Pierre Grassou, and Bianchon came to keep Joseph company, and often held discussions in an undertone in the sick woman's room.

'Oh! how I wish I knew what was meant by colour!' she exclaimed one evening when she heard them talking about a picture.

Joseph's conduct on his part was sublime towards his mother; he scarcely left her room; he cherished Agathe in his heart; he responded to her tenderness with equal tenderness. It was to the painter's friends one of those

beautiful spectacles which can never be forgotten. These men, who all were examples of the union of real talent and noble character, were for Joseph and his mother all that they ought to be—angels who prayed with him and wept with him—not that they said prayers or shed tears, but they were one with him in thought and act. Joseph, an artist as noble in feeling as in gifts, read in certain of his mother's looks a longing hidden deep in her heart; and he said one day to d'Arthez, 'She was too fond of that robber Philippe not to want to see him again before she dies . . .'

Joseph requested Bixiou, who was a figure in the Bohemian world which Philippe would occasionally frequent, to make that infamous parvenu promise to assume, out of pity, some show of affection, so as to wrap the poor mother's heart in a shroud graced by illusion. Bixiou, as a student of human nature, a misanthropic scoffer, was ready and willing to undertake such a mission. When he had explained Agathe's situation to the Comte de Brambourg, who received him in a bedroom hung with yellow silk damask, the Colonel burst out laughing—

'What the devil do you want me to do there?' cried he. 'The only service the good woman can do me is to kick the bucket as soon as possible, for she would cut a bad figure at my wedding with Mademoiselle de Soulanges. The less family I have to show, the better for me! As you may well suppose, I only wish I could bury the name of Bridau under all the tombstones in Père-Lachaise.

'My brother ruins me by proclaiming my real name to the world. But you, at any rate, are too clever not to understand my position. Come, now—if you were to be elected deputy, you have a ready tongue of your own; you would be as much feared as Chauvelin, and you might be made Comte Bixiou, Director of the Beaux Arts. If you had achieved that, and if your grandmother Descoings were still alive, how would you like to have

that good woman at your elbow—a woman like Madame Saint-Léon? Would you offer her your arm in the Tuileries? Would you introduce her to the noble family you might seek to enter? By Heaven! I tell you, you would wish her six feet under ground, packed in a wrapper of lead.—Come, breakfast with me, and we will talk of something else. I am a parvenu, my dear fellow, and I know it. I do not mean to display my baby-clothes!—My son, now, will be luckier than I; he will be a fine gentleman. The rascal will wish me dead, and I quite expect it, or he will be no son of mine.'

He rang the bell; a footman came in, to whom he said—

'My friend will breakfast with me. Send up something elegant.'

'But the fashionable world would not see you in your mother's room,' retorted Bixiou. 'What would it cost you to pretend to love the poor woman for a few hours?'

'All my eye!' said Philippe, with a wink. 'They have sent you. I am an old bird, and not to be caught with chaff. My mother wants to conjure me with her last breath to fork out something for Joseph! Thank you for nothing.'

When Bixiou repeated this scene to Joseph, the poor painter felt chilled to the very soul.

'Does Philippe know that I am ill?' said Agathe in a lamentable voice the evening of the very day when Bixiou had given an account of his errand.

Joseph left the room choked with tears. The Abbé Loraux, who was at the patient's side, took her hand and pressed it as he replied, 'Alas! my child, you have never had but one son.'

On hearing these words, which she understood, Agathe had an attack that was the beginning of the end. She died twenty hours after. In the wanderings of her mind before death the words escaped her, 'Who does Philippe take after?'

Joseph alone followed his mother to the grave. Philippe had gone to Orleans on regimental business, scared from Paris by the following letter, addressed to him by Joseph as their mother breathed her last :—

'WRETCH,—My poor mother is dead of the shock your letter caused. Put on mourning. But pretend to be ill; I will not have her murderer to stand at my side by her coffin. JOSEPH B.'

The painter, who had lost all heart for his painting, though his deep grief perhaps needed the sort of mechanical diversion that work brings with it, was surrounded by friends, who agreed among themselves not to leave him to solitude. Thus Bixiou, who loved Joseph as truly as a scoffer can love any one, was one of a group of friends in Joseph's studio one day, a fortnight after the funeral. At this moment the maid bustled in, and handed to Joseph a letter, brought, as she said, by an old woman who would wait for the answer in the porter's lodge :—

'MONSIEUR,—Whom I do not venture to call my brother, I must apply to you, were it only by reason of the name I bear——'

Joseph turned the page, and looked at the signature at the end. These words, 'Comtesse Flore de Brambourg,' made his blood run chill, for he foresaw some fresh abomination of his brother's doing.

'That wretch,' said he, 'would outdevil the Devil! And *that* is a man of honour—*that* can hang a peck of tinsel on its breast—*that* spreads its tail at Court instead of being flogged at the cart's tail!—And this precious scoundrel is Monsieur le Comte!'

'There are many like him,' said Bixiou.

'And besides that, this Rabouilleuse deserves nothing

from me,' Joseph went on. 'She is not worth a curse; she would have left me to have my head chopped off like a fowl without ever saying "He is innocent."'

As Joseph tossed away the letter, Bixiou nimbly caught it, and read it aloud:—

'—Is it becoming that Madame la Comtesse de Brambourg, whatever her faults may be, should be sent to die in a hospital? If that is to be my fate, if that is the Count's wish and yours, so be it; but then, as you are a friend of Doctor Bianchon's, get his introduction to get me into a hospital. The woman who takes you this letter, Monsieur, has been eleven days running to the Hôtel de Brambourg in the Rue de Clichy without being able to obtain any help from my husband. The state in which I am prevents my employing an attorney so as to obtain by law what is due to me and to die in peace. Indeed, nothing can save me; I know it. So if you will positively have nothing to say to your unhappy sister-in-law, give me money enough to enable me to put an end to my days; for your brother, I see, wishes my death, and always has wished it. Though he told me he knew three certain ways of killing a woman, I had not the wit to foresee the means he has taken.

'If so be you should honour me with a little assistance, and judge for yourself of the misery I am in, I am living in the Rue du Houssay, at the corner of the Rue Chantereine, on the fifth floor. If I do not pay my arrears of rent to-morrow, I must turn out. And where am I to go, Monsieur? May I sign myself,

'Your sister-in-law,

'COMTESSE FLORE DE BRAMBOURG.'

'What a foul pit of infamy!' said Joseph. 'What is there behind it?'

'Have the woman up first; that will be a worthy preface to the story no doubt,' said Bixiou.

A minute after there appeared on the scene a woman whom Bixiou described as walking rags. She was, in fact, a mass of clothes and old gowns, one over another, bordered with mud from the weather, the whole mounted on thick legs and splay feet, with patched stockings and shoes, from which the water oozed through many cracks. To crown this mass of rubbish was such a head as Charlet has given to his sweepers, helmeted with a hideous bandana, worn threadbare even in the creases.

'What is your name?' asked Joseph, while Bixiou sketched the woman as she stood, leaning on an umbrella of the year II. of the Republic.

'Madame Gruget, at your service. I have drawed my dividends in my day, my little gentleman,' said she to Bixiou, whose covert smile offended her. 'If my pore girl hadn't been so unlucky as to be too fond of a man, I shouldn't look so as you see me. She made a hole in the water, saving your presence, my pore Ida. And then I was fool enough to go in for lottery tickets, four numbers, and sticking to them, and that is why at seventy years old, my good Monsieur, I am sick-nurse at ten sous a day and my food——'

'But not your clothes,' said Bixiou. My grandmother dressed herself, besides keeping up a snug little ternion.'

'But out of my ten sous I have to pay for a furnished room . . .'

'And what has she got—this lady you are nursing?'

'She has got nothing, Monsieur, by way of money I mean; for she has got some complaint that frightens the doctors.—She owes me sixty days' pay, and that is why I stay with her. Her husband, who is a Count—for she is a Countess—will pay the bill, no doubt, when she is dead, and counting on that, I have lent her all I had . . . But I have nothing left, and I have put everything up the spout. She owes me forty-seven francs and twelve sous, besides the thirty francs wages, and as she wants to choke herself off with charcoal: "That is not

right," says I—more by token I told the woman in the lodge to keep an eye on her while I was out, for she is capable of throwing herself out of window.'

'But what is the matter with her?' said Joseph.

'Well, sir, the doctor came from the Sisters; but as to what is the matter,' said Madame Gruget, with a prudish air—'he said she must go to the hospital—and she wouldn't get over it.'

'We will go and see about it,' said Bixiou.

'Here,' said Joseph, 'here are ten francs.'

After putting his hand into the famous death's-head and taking out all his change, the painter walked to the Rue Mazarine, where he took a hackney cab and went off to Bianchon, whom he fortunately found at home, while Bixiou set out for the Rue de Bussy to fetch their friend Desroches. The four friends met an hour after in the Rue du Houssay.

'That Mephistopheles on horseback called Philippe Bridau,' said Bixiou to his three friends as they climbed the stairs, 'has steered his bark in a cunning way to get rid of his wife. Our friend Lousteau, as you know, only too glad to get a thousand-franc note every month from Philippe, kept Madame Bridau in the company of Florine, Mariette, Tullia, and la Val-Noble. As soon as Philippe saw his Rabouilleuse accustomed to dress and expensive pleasures, he gave her no more money, but left her to make it—you may imagine how. Thus by the end of eighteen months Philippe left his wife to sink a little lower, from quarter to quarter; and at last, by the help of a splendid young subaltern, he suggested to her a taste for dram-drinking. As he rose his wife sank, and the Countess is now in the kennel. The woman born in the fields is hard to kill; I do not know how Philippe set to work to get rid of her. I am curious to study this little drama, for I owe the fellow a revenge. Alas! my friends,' Bixiou went on, in a tone that left his three companions doubtful whether he spoke in joke or in

earnest, 'to get rid of a man you have only to inoculate him with a vice.

'"She loved balls too well and that was her death," said Victor Hugo. There you are. My grandmother loved lottery gambling; Père Rouget loved a petticoat, and Lolotte was the death of him! Madame Bridau, poor creature, loved Philippe, and by Philippe she has perished. Oh, Vice! Vice!—My friends, do you know what vice is? It is the Bonneau of death.'

'Then you will die of a jest!' said Desroches, smiling at Bixiou.

Above the fourth floor the young men mounted one of those upright stairways like ladders which lead up to the attics of many houses in Paris. Though Joseph, who had seen Flore so handsome, was prepared for a dreadful contrast, he could not conceive of the hideous spectacle that presented itself to his artistic gaze. Under the sharp slope of a garret, with no paper on the walls, and on a camp-bed with a meagre mattress stuffed perhaps with flock, the three men saw a woman as green as a body two days drowned, and as emaciated as a consumptive patient within two hours of death. This malodorous carcass wore a common checked handkerchief bound round a head bereft of hair. The caverns of her hollow eyes were red, and the lids like the skin that lines an egg-shell. As to the form that had once been so beautiful, it was a squalid skeleton.

On seeing her visitors, Flore drew across her bosom a rag of muslin that had probably been a window-blind, for it was edged with rust from the iron rod. The furniture consisted of two chairs, a wretched chest of drawers, on which a tallow candle was set in a potato, some dishes strewn on the floor, and an earthen fire-pot in the corner of an otherwise empty hearth. Bixiou saw the remains of the half-quire of paper purchased at the grocer's for the letter which the two women had no doubt concocted between them. The word loathsome

is but a positive degree for which there is no superlative to express the effect produced by this abject scene.

When the dying woman saw Philippe, two large tears fell down her cheeks.

'She can still weep,' said Bixiou. 'A strange sight indeed—tears flowing from a bag of dominoes. It explains Moses' miracle.'

'Is not she dried up!' cried Joseph.

'By the fires of repentance,' said Flore. 'I can have no priest, I have nothing, not even a crucifix to see the Image of God. Oh! Monsieur,' she went on, uplifting arms like two carved wooden sticks, 'I have been very wicked, but God never punished any one as He has punished me! Philippe killed Max, who had bidden me to do horrible things, and now he is killing me too. God is using him as a scourge for me! Behave yourself well, for we all have our Philippe.'

'Leave me alone with her,' said Bianchon; 'I want to find out if her complaint is curable.'

'If she can be cured, Philippe Bridau will be mad with rage,' said Desroches. 'I will have an affidavit prepared as to the state his wife is in; he has not taken any steps against her for adultery; she has all her conjugal rights; he must face the scandal of a trial. First of all, we will have Madame la Comtesse conveyed to Doctor Dubois' Home for the Sick in the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Denis; she will there be nursed in luxury. Then I shall call upon the Count for reinstatement under her husband's roof.'

'Bravo, Desroches!' cried Bixiou. 'What joy to be able to do good that will hurt so much!'

Ten minutes later Bianchon came down and said to his friends: 'I am off at once to Desplein; he can save this woman by an operation. Ah! he will see that she is taken good care of, for the habit of drinking spirits had developed in her a splendid disease that we thought was extinct.'

'You wretch of a doctor, get along! As if she had but one disease,' said Bixiou.

But Bianchon was already in the courtyard, so great was his haste to go and tell the grand news to Desplein. Two hours later Joseph's unhappy sister-in-law was carried to the private hospital founded by Doctor Dubois, which was subsequently bought by the city of Paris.

Three weeks later the *Hospital Gazette* contained an account of one of the boldest attempts of modern surgery in operating on a patient mentioned under the initials F. B. The subject died, much more of the weakness consequent on prolonged privations than as a result of the operation.

The Comte de Brambourg at once went in deep mourning to call on the Comte de Soulanges, and inform him of the melancholy loss he had sustained. It was whispered in the fashionable world that the Comte de Soulanges was allowing his daughter to marry a *parvenu* of distinguished merit, who was to be made Maréchal de Camp and Colonel of a regiment of the Bodyguard. De Marsay announced the news to Rastignac, who spoke of it at a supper at the Rocher de Cancale where he met Bixiou.

'That shall never be!' said the cunning artist to himself.

If among the friends Philippe had cut adrift there were some who, like Giroudeau, could not revenge themselves, he had proved himself unwary in offending Bixiou, whose wit secured him a reception everywhere, and who never forgave a slight. Now at the Rocher de Cancale, in the presence of highly respectable persons at supper there, Philippe had replied when Bixiou asked him to invite him to the Hotel de Brambourg, 'You may come to my house when you are a minister.'

'Must I also become a Protestant to get into your

house?' replied Bixiou lightly; but he said to himself, 'Though you may be a Goliath, I have a sling, and plenty of stones to fling.'

Next day the practical joker dressed at the house of an actor, a friend of his, and was metamorphosed by the omnipotent art of 'make-up' into a secularised priest in green spectacles; then he took a fly and drove to the house of the Comte de Soulanges. Bixiou, treated by Philippe as a buffoon, meant to play a trick on him.

Being admitted by the Comte de Soulanges on his urgent plea that he had an important matter to lay before the Count, Bixiou played the part of a venerable personage charged with an important secret. In an assumed voice he related the history of the dead Countess's illness, of which Bianchon had given him the particulars, that of Agathe's death, that of old Rouget's death, of which the Comte de Brambourg had boasted, and that of old Madame Descoings' end; the story of the 'loan' from the cash-box of the newspaper, and the facts as to Philippe's general conduct in his worst times.

'Monsieur le Comte, do not give him your daughter till you have made every inquiry; question his former friends—Bixiou, Captain Giroudeau, and others.'

Three months after this the Comte de Brambourg entertained a party at supper: du Tillet, Nucingen, Rastignac, Maxime de Trailles, and de Marsay. The host was taking very easily the half-consolatory speeches made to him by guests concerning his rupture with the house of Soulanges.

'You can do better,' said Maxime.

'What fortune would be expected to qualify a man to marry a demoiselle de Grandlieu?' asked Philippe of de Marsay.

'To qualify you?—They would not let you have the ugliest of the six for less than ten million francs,' replied de Marsay insolently.

'Pooh!' said Rastignac; 'but with two hundred

thousand francs a year you may have Mademoiselle de Langeais, the Marquis's daughter; she is ugly, she is thirty, and has not a sou of her own. That ought to satisfy you.'

'I shall have ten millions within two years' time,' replied Philippe Bridau.

'It is January 16th, 1829,' cried du Tillet, smiling. 'I have been working for ten years, and I have not so much, not I!'

'We will advise each other, and you will see how I manage money matters.'

'Why, how much have you altogether?' asked Nucingen.

'If I sold my securities and everything, excepting my estate and this house, which I could not and will not risk, as they are secured by entail, I could certainly handle three millions.'

Nucingen and du Tillet looked at each other; then after this keen flash, du Tillet said to Philippe—

'My dear Count, we will work in partnership if you like.'

De Marsay caught the glance that du Tillet had shot at Nucingen, and which said, 'Those millions are ours!'

In fact, these two great financiers were at the very centre of political affairs, enabling them to gamble on the Bourse at a given date and with absolute certainty, against Philippe, when the chances would seem to him to be in his favour, while in reality they were in theirs.

The chance came. In July 1830 du Tillet and Nucingen had enabled the Comte de Brambourg to make fifteen hundred thousand francs; he no longer distrusted them, and thought their advice sound. Philippe, who had risen by the Restoration, and who was misled by intense contempt for civilians, believed in the success of the new decrees, and would play for a rise; while Nucingen and du Tillet, who expected a Revolution, played against him for a fall. But the two shrewd

partners affected to agree with Colonel the Comte de Brambourg, and seemed to share his convictions; they held out hopes of his doubling his millions, and arranged to win them from him. Philippe fought like a man to whom victory means four million francs. His zeal was so conspicuous that he was ordered to return to Saint-Cloud with the Duc de Maufrigneuse to sit in council. This mark of favour saved Philippe; for he wanted, on July 25th, to sweep the Boulevards with a charge of cavalry, and he would no doubt have fallen to a bullet from his friend Giroudeau, who commanded a body of the adversary.

Within a month nothing of his immense fortune remained to Colonel Bridau but his mansion, his estate, his pictures, and furniture. He was fool enough too, as he said, to believe in the re-establishment of the elder branch, to which he remained faithful till 1834. Then, on seeing Giroudeau a Colonel, Philippe, prompted by very intelligible jealousy, rejoined the service. In 1835 he, unfortunately, was appointed to the command of a regiment in Algiers, where for three years he was left in a post of danger, hoping to win his general's epaulettes; but a malignant influence—that of General Giroudeau—left him where he was. Philippe, by this time grown hard, carried military severity to an extreme, and was detested in spite of his Murat-like bravery.

At the beginning of the fatal year 1839, while turning to harry the Arabs in the course of a retreat before superior numbers, he rushed on the foe, supported by one company only. They fell upon a body of Arabs; the struggle was bloody, frightful, hand to hand, and very few of the French horse escaped. Seeing that their Colonel was surrounded, those who were at some little distance did not deem it wise to perish in a vain attempt to rescue him. They heard his shout, 'Help! Your Colonel!—A Colonel of the Empire!' followed by fearful cries, but they got back to their regiment. Philippe died a

horrible death, for they cut off his head, when he fell hacked almost to pieces by yataghans.

Joseph, who was married about this time by the good offices of the Comte de Sérizy to the daughter of an old millionaire farmer, inherited the house and the estate of Brambourg, which his brother had been unable to sell, though he would gladly have deprived him of his inheritance. What gave the painter most pleasure was the fine collection of pictures. Joseph, whose father-in-law adds daily to his hoards, has already an income of sixty thousand francs. Though he paints splendid pictures, and is always doing services to his fellow-artists, he is not yet a member of the Institute. In consequence of a clause in the parchment of entail, he is now Comte de Brambourg, which often makes him burst out laughing among his friends in his studio.

'Fine birds make fine feathers,' his friend Léon de Lora will then remark; for even now that he is famous as a landscape painter, he has not given up his old trick of perverting proverbs, and he told Joseph *à propos* of the modesty with which he accepted the favours of fortune, 'Never mind. A feast is as good as enough.'

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